

Navy News

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FEBRUARY 2001

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Royal Oak as never seen before

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Longest mission is over for 845 Squadron

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WE'LL HAVE THE WORLD'S BEST

£1.3bn places strike fighter in the Royal Navy's sights

BRITAIN has set its sights on the Joint Strike Fighter for the Royal Navy's future aircraft carriers and signed a £1.3 billion deal with America at the start of the biggest military procurement programme in history, writes **Dominic Blake**.

The Ministry of Defence wants 150 of the single-seat supersonic aircraft to replace the FA2 Sea Harrier and GR7 Harrier ground attack aircraft, providing a strike force for the new class of carrier which will enter service in 2012.

As many as 5,000 Joint Strike Fighters costing \$400 billion could be built throughout their service life, producing vast economies in both production and support, and the total cost to the UK is expected to be less than £10 billion.

The deal signed with America commits the MOD to the engineering and manufacturing development stage of the JSF programme, which, together with another £600 million of work on the UK's particular requirements, will create or sustain 5,000 jobs in Britain's aviation industry.

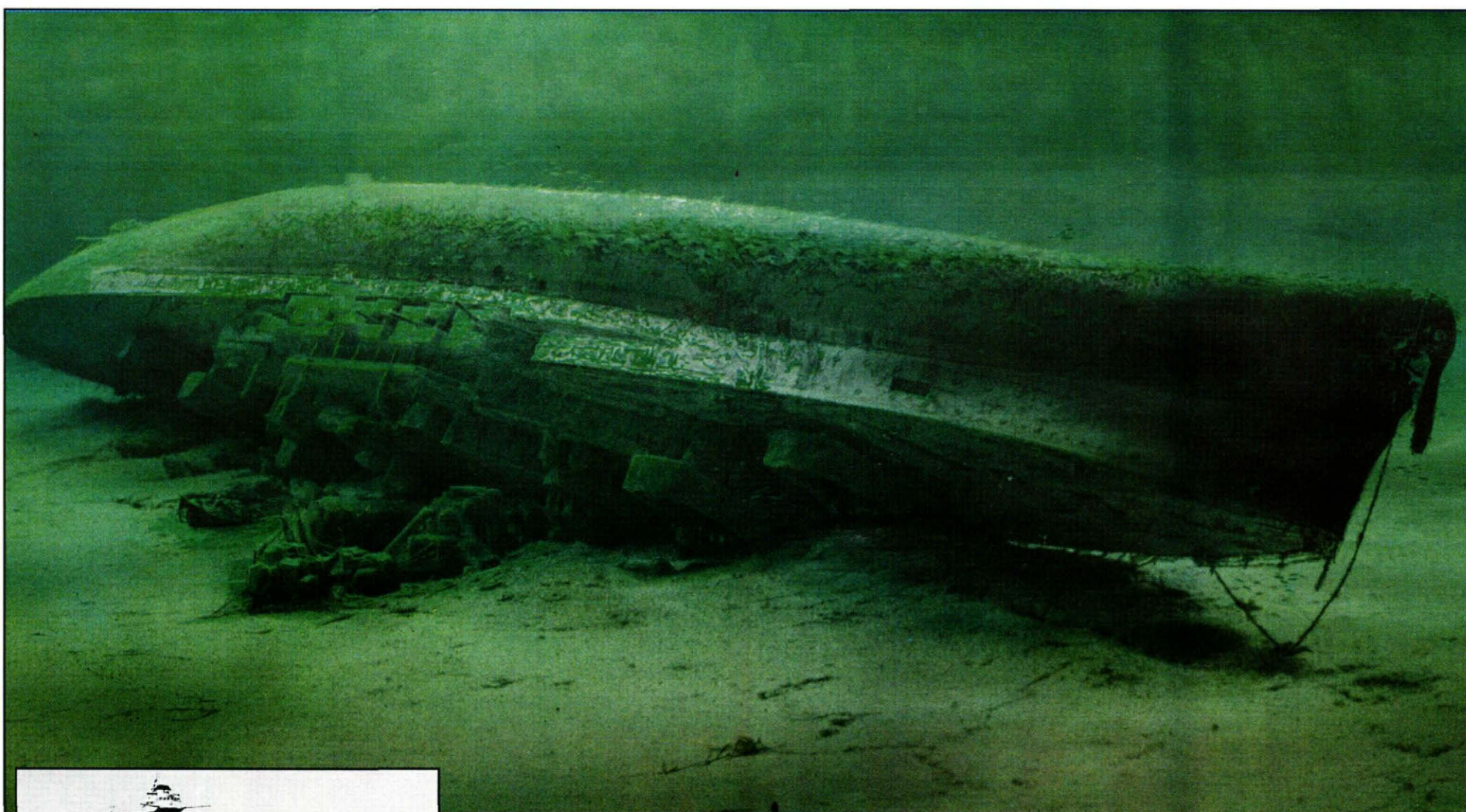
Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said: "The Joint

■ Turn to page 34



● The Lockheed X-35, one of the contenders for the choice of Joint Strike Fighter, and (inset) the first British pilot to fly one of the JSF prototypes – Lt Cdr Paul Stone RN. Full story of his test flight – p34.

ROYAL OAK'S PLACE OF REST



● HMS Royal Oak two years before she was sunk.

SHE LIES forlornly on her starboard side, almost completely capsized. Her foretop and funnel lie scattered by the impact of her fall which drove the breeches of her massive 15in guns through the armoured turret tops. The seabed is punctured by the skeletons of her toppled whalers while the lines of her broken carcass are softened by a fine shroud of seaweed.

This is HMS Royal Oak as she is today – as she ended up on October 14, 1939 when Lt Gunther Prien's U-47 torpedoed her in the Home Fleet's supposedly safe haven of Scapa Flow in the Orkneys. She was the

first British battleship to be lost in World War II, and 833 officers and men perished with her.

This picture, the first of its kind to be produced of the ship, is a faithful representation of how the war grave looks – although in reality the murky waters in which she rests, 25 metres deep, would deny any diver such a long-range view.

The image has been built up by Ocean Optics, a specialist firm of underwater photographers who, with the permission of the Ministry of Defence, took pictures and video film of the exterior of the ship. As the first stage in producing the complete picture, the Ocean Optics team dived for two

weeks last September capturing unique footage.

From that data a model was built to simulate the position and condition in which the ship lies. A photograph of the model was then used by an artist to produce a painting, including underwater growth and colouring.

Ocean Optics are producing a 50-minute video, including underwater sequences and interviews with survivors – and with the first diver to descend to the wreck. The film's end credits include the names of all those lost with the ship.

■ Ocean Optics can be contacted on 020 8399 5709.

Anti-pollution plan to drain wreck's fuel

Somerset film stars Amanda

THE NAVY recruiting film made on board the frigate HMS Somerset last year (*Navy News* November) will feature *LA Law* star Amanda Donohoe.

The film forms a major part of a new recruiting campaign launched on January 15. It is being shown as a 40-second commercial on ITV and as a 60-second 'short' showing throughout January-February at selected cinemas.

The film contrasts a selfish, commercial approach with Navy teamwork. Amanda Donohoe playing a city businesswoman in the longer version, which then cuts to HMS Somerset involved in a humanitarian evacuation, the star providing the voice-over. Only her voice is used in the shorter item.

A FRESH PLAN to prevent pollution caused by increasing levels of oil escaping from the wreck of HMS Royal Oak is due to begin in June.

The project is intended to remove all fuel from the ship in a seven-week operation. The battleship sank in 1939 with at least 900 tons of oil on board, and perhaps as much as 1,800 tons.

Over the years oil has been seeping through corroded rivets and plates on the deteriorating hull. Efforts to patch the hull and attach a containment canopy failed when the canopy became detached by storms two years ago.

The new plan using a different method will be carried out by the Salvage and Mooring Organisation (SMO) within the Naval Bases Supply Agency. SMO staff will

work with commercial staff.

A study on how to stem the flow of fuel concluded that 'hot tapping' would remove the oil with minimal intrusion and disturbance to the war grave.

The technique is derived from the oil production industry and involves the joining of a valve or flange to a pipe or space that contains a substance under different pressures or temperatures.

Taps will be attached by drilling holes in the side of the ship to reach the fuel tanks. Once the taps have been attached they will provide a natural escape route for the oil so that it can be drawn off and removed in a controlled way which will not affect the environment.

The Ministry of Defence says that consultation has been carried out with the Royal Oak Association, – which represents the remaining survivors – and the relatives of those who died, and that they are content with the plan.



System breathes its last after 47 years

A SHIPBOARD system which has been in use for almost half a century has finally been shut down – on board HMS Invincible.

The carrier's liquid oxygen plant was given a send-off by these engineering watchkeepers, led by Cdr(E) Rob Thompson, during its final run while the ship was undertaking her autumn deployment.

The plant, a standby to produce breathing oxygen for fixed-wing pilots, was first used by HMS Eagle in 1953. It was removed in the early 1970s

and then fitted to Invincible when she was built.

Invincible's stokers think the plant is the oldest system fitted in any Royal Navy ship. It will be removed when the carrier goes to Rosyth for refit this year, and will be replaced by a gaseous oxygen electrolyser system.

The team pictured are (l-r kneeling) MEM Mark Kerton, CPOMEA Nick Carter, MEM Chris Slinger; (standing) MEM Scouse Carr, LMEM Knock White, Cdr Thompson, LMEM Pusser Hill, MEM Taz Arthur and LMEM Waggy Wagstaff.



Philip unveils RNVR Roll of Honour

THE DUKE of Edinburgh has unveiled a Roll of Honour at the Naval Club, London, commemorating the 6,200 members of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve who died on active service in World War II.

Included are 15 members of the Dominion and Colonial Naval Volunteer Reserve forces.

This unique record has been made possible through the WAVE Heritage Trust, a charity established in 1995 by members of the RNVR Officers Association to preserve the Mayfair club building at 38 Hill Street – formerly the RNVR Club.

The RNVR was composed largely of volunteer, amateur seamen – as opposed to the RNR, which was made up of professional merchant seamen. By the end of the war there were 55,000 RNVR officers and reservists made up of 80 per cent of the total officer strength of the RN. They were present in every theatre of war and every branch of the Senior Service. Among many famous RNVR officers were Sir Peter Scott, Sir Ludovic Kennedy, Nevil Shute and Nicholas Monsarrat.

The Roll of Honour – on permanent display in a cabinet designed and crafted by Lord Linley – has been compiled by Chief Officer Paula Vokes, RNVR, through research with the MOD, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the naval authorities of the countries involved and the Imperial War Museum.

A page of the Roll will be turned every day. As well as the names of those killed, it records details of rank, age, ship in which serving, date and place of death and in which cemetery or on which memorial they are commemorated, as far as they are known. Individual entries may be viewed by appointment by calling the club on 020 7529 5600.

● Prince Philip chats with Chief Officer Paula Vokes after unveiling the RNVR Roll of Honour at the Naval Club.

Propulsors to power major landing vessels

New ships do without rudders

ORDERS for two new amphibious landing ships have been placed with Swan Hunter (Tyneside) Ltd.

They will be the first of Britain's major Naval vessels to be without traditional rudders, being steered instead by electric-powered propulsors.

The vessels, almost three times the size of the ships they are intended to replace, are designated Alternative Landing Ships Logistic

(ALSL). They will be operated by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and will be named RFA Lyme Bay and RFA Largs Bay.

The names have not been used for any ships in British Naval Service before, although a ship renamed Largs, a former French

armed merchant cruiser, was used by Britain as a landing ship in World War II and was HQ for Sword Beach in the British sector for the D-Day landings.

The new ships will be built on the Tyne with the first entering service in 2004. They will replace the landing ships RFA Sir Geraint and RFA Sir Percivale, commissioned over 30 years ago.

The ALSLs are expected to be twice as capable as the Sir Bedivere class ships, being able to carry double the number of vehicles – about 70 – and unload them quicker via landing craft which can leave through a stern dock. The ships will have purpose-designed assault routes to allow rapid disembarkation.

Contracts for two further vessels – to replace Sir Bedivere and Sir Tristram – are expected to be placed with BAe Systems Marine at Govan this year, subject to successful negotiations.

● An artist's impression of the new amphibious landing ship, due to enter service in 2004.



JACK ET JACQUES

Le Mission Impossible

(A bord de HMS Cottesmore, Faslane, Ecosse)

'Nous avons un grand challenge ici, Jack!'

'Qu'est-ce que c'est, then, Jacques, ma vieille Chine?'

'Il s'appelle un "jail break", Jack. Il est pour charité. Il faut que nous voyagions le plus loin de notre start point en 24 heures – seulement avec nos own resources.'

'Nos own resources? Je n'ai pas de resources, Jacques. Après Noël, je suis down to mon dernier dix quid.'

'Oui, moi aussi, Jack... Alors, 'ow about votre Sir Richard Branson? Peut-être il nous prêtera un de ses ballons? Comme Jules Verne dans "Around le Monde en 80 Jours".'

'Mais nous avons seulement 24 heures, Jacques! Virgin Trains, en 24 heures, ils ne peuvent pas garantir un passage de Guz à Pompey!'

'Oui, vraiment! Mais Branson, il a aussi cette grande idée pour Le Loterie du Peuple, Jack! Il est un entrepreneur buccaneer! Il a une barbe aussi! Un matelot manqué, je crois! Il sera sympathique, sans aucune doute! Et il est un opportunité pour visiter ma grande tante Bernadette – elle a une petite hideaway villa en l'Argave de Portugal!'

'Votre grande tante Bernadette – elle est encore vivante?'

'Oui – mais c'est un secret, Jack. Interpol et la Sureté, ils croient qu'elle est morte. Vous comprenez?'

'Je comprends absolument, Jacques. Et bien – 'appy 'olidays, eh? Je téléphonerai le bureau de Virgin Airways tout de suite...'

(24 heures après)

'Allo? Richard? Richard Branson? Pardon, Sir Richard Branson? Ici Jack.'

'Ah, oui. Vous êtes bien arrivé, j'espère, à Lisbon?'

'Er, non, hélas. Nous sommes à Lisburn, Nord Irlande. Merci beaucoup, Richard...'



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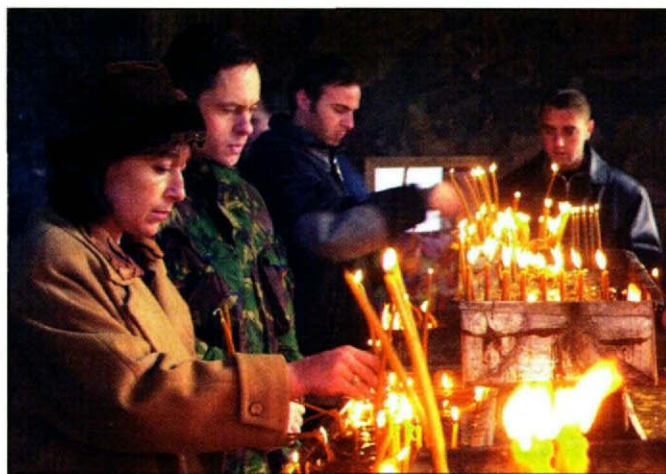
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● **CHRISTMAS ACCOMMODATION:** Marines from X-Ray Company, 45 Commando, guarding their 'home' over Christmas, an unfinished Serbian church in Pristina.



● **FLAMETHROWER:** A Challenger 2 tank fires a high explosive round. Tanks from the Queen's Royal Hussars are serving in Kosovo as part of KFOR.



● **SERBIAN CHRISTMAS:** Royal Marines Major Peter Cameron at the Serbian monastery in Gracanica during their Christmas celebrations on January 7. The monastery dates back to the 1300s and is of great significance to the people of Serbia.



● **SKI PATROL:** Royal Marines from 45 Commando Group in Kosovo get their ski legs going high up in the hills above Pristina.

Busy New Year for Marines in Kosovo

Nobody likes to be away from home over the festive season and the personnel of 45 Commando Group are no exception.

But every effort was made to make the most of Christmas and welcome in the New Year in Pristina, Kosovo where 45 Commando Group is currently in their last two months of a six-month tour.

The Christmas celebrations began with a Royal Marines Band Christmas Charity concert in the centre of Pristina which was attended by more than 1000 people.

Despite the freezing temperatures within the venue the Band performed to their usual high standards.

The concert, organised by 7 (Sphinx) Commando Battery, one of the Unit's three ground-holding companies, raised £1,400 and these proceeds were used to buy computers for a local Special Educational Needs school.

The other companies, X-Ray and Zulu, entered into the Christmas spirit by donning Santa outfits and delivering teddy bears and other presents to needy children.

All ranks enjoyed a traditional Christmas meal served by the officers and a carol service, though the celebrations were divided between Christmas Eve and Boxing Day to ensure operational commitments were met.

On New Year's Eve Pristina was lit up by fireworks. Tracer rounds

**Report: Allan Youp
Pictures: Steve Lewis**

added to the spectacle as a result of the more sinister form of celebration, the 'Balkan Unload' with no thought as to where the bullets would land.

The companies have confiscated a staggering quantity of illegally-held weapons but despite all our efforts there are many still at large. Patrols conducted on New Year's Eve proved fruitful, reducing the number further.

These actions are in direct support of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo's (UNMIK) efforts in removing illegal weapons from the streets of Kosovo.

A week into the New Year a Company HQ with a troop of Royal Marines and Gunners (from 7 Battery) were tasked to join KFOR's Operational Reserve in the Presevo Valley.



● **PIPER:** Mne Morrison plays in the New Year with the sound of the Highland Bagpipes with the landscape of Pristina behind.

This is on the border of the Ground Security Zone (GSZ) which separates Kosovo and Serbia. On the first night of their deployment a car carrying Albanian Extremists was intercepted having crossed the border.

When challenged, one man tried to shoot at the patrol, but he was captured and detained for questioning.

Elements of the Unit will remain in Presevo Valley for the near future.

High-intensity patrolling by the Royal Marines has seen crime figures drop dramatically during the last four months.

As well as patrolling, the Unit is actively engaging the local community in a range of Civil-Military projects and providing invaluable low level training for the Kosovo Protection Corps, and with the onset of winter, it is hoped to conduct some specialist Cold Weather Warfare training for elements of the Unit.



● **FIELD OF BLACKBIRDS:** Thousands of birds leave the fields and head towards Pristina to roost. The phenomena, known locally as Polje (field of blackbirds) occurs every evening at the site of a huge battle between a Serbian army and the Ottoman Turks.

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VC won as ship was sunk

ONLY one other ship has borne the name Walney, and she started life as the USS Sebago.

She was built in 1930 as a US Coast Guard cutter, and transferred to Britain in May 1941 as the 2,000-ton gunboat HMS Walney.

She immediately saw action escorting Atlantic convoys, winning a Battle Honour.

Walney was sunk with heavy loss of life in one of the most dangerous naval operations of the war, the attack on Oran Harbour during Operation Torch in early November 1942.

Walney and her sister ship, HMS Hartland, with two motor launches, carried commandos and American assault troops to take the harbour.

Leading the force in, Walney breached the harbour defence boom to land the troops under withering fire from warships and shore batteries.

Before she sank, Walney accounted for a destroyer.

Capt Frederic Thornton Peters, commanding the operation on board Walney, was awarded the Victoria Cross as a testament to the heroism of all involved.



● The first HMS Walney, sunk in the attack on Oran.



● HMS Walney after her recent refit, now boasting a second crane and a new compression chamber among other enhancements.

Upgrade for Walney

HMS WALNEY has emerged from refit closer to her younger Sandown-class sisters than her Batch 1 contemporaries.

Walney was the fourth of the single-role minehunters to enter service with the Royal Navy, developed to counter the sophisticated hi-tech selective mines being creat-

ed which could not be easily swept in the traditional fashion.

Instead, using computer-aided sonar equipment and a remote-controlled unmanned submersible – or clearance divers – single mines can be identified and destroyed.

Her hull is built of glass-reinforced plastic, which reduces the magnetic signature.

And Walney has a sophisticated tactical information system which uses sonar, navigational and manual inputs to plot an exact position, and this can be used to control the ship's twin Voith Schneider propellers – carousel units with five vertical adjustable blades, allowing thrust to be applied in any direction.

When minehunting, to reduce vibration and noise, the ship switches from her Paxman Valenta diesels to two 100kW slow-speed drive electric motors.

The highlight of Walney's refit package, carried out at Rosyth, was the fitting of the new transportable

manned compression chamber, increasing the maximum diving depth of the ship's diving team from 42 metres to 80 metres.

In the most complex package of work attempted on a Sandown-class ship, Walney has also been fully 'tropicalised' to improve conditions on board while operating in areas of extreme heat.

Both her main engines and two generators have been replaced, and a second crane added, in addition to renovation work in accommodation, recreation and galley compartments.

After a busy programme of post-refit trials, the New Year brought shakedown and operational sea

training work – but a busy programme of visits is also planned.

The ship is due to spend some time in her affiliated town of Barrow-in-Furness and the island of Walney off Barrow from which she takes her name.

Spells in Jersey and Chatham are also planned for the summer.

She is due to deploy for three months with sister ships of the Second Mine Countermeasures Squadron at the end of the year.

Walney has changed base port, from Faslane to Portsmouth, and will rededicate on the South Coast during the summer.

Facts and figures

Class: Sandown class single-role minehunter
Pennant number: M104
Builder: Vosper Thornycroft
Launched: November 25, 1991
Commissioned: August 19, 1992
Displacement: 484 tonnes, fully loaded
Length: 52.5 metres
Beam: 10.5 metres
Draught: 2.2 metres
Speed: 13 knots on diesels, 6.5 knots on electric drive
Complement: 34 (5 officers)
Main machinery: Two Paxman Valenta diesels; Voith Schneider propulsion; two Schottel bow thrusters
Sensors: Sonar: Marconi Type 2093; radar: Kelvin Hughes Type 1007
Weapons: BMARC 30mm gun
Affiliations: Lady Elizabeth Wilson (ship's sponsor); Barrow-in-Furness; Waveney District Council; Old Walney Survivors; Intensive Care Department, Furness General Hospital; The Lancastrian and Cumbrian Volunteers; Woodbridge School CCF; TS Sovereign, Barrow; TS Europa, Lowestoft; TS Brave, Beccles; TS Quantock, Tameside.

BATTLE HONOURS

Atlantic 1941-42
 North Africa 1942

AIRCRAFT OF THE ROYAL NAVY No 52



● A Hawker Osprey IV floatplane, its serial number tending to indicate service with one of the cruisers of the Home Fleet in the early 1930s.

Hawker Osprey

CLOSELY resembling its single-seat stablemate the Nimrod, the Hawker Osprey was the Fleet Air Arm's first fast, two-seat fighter reconnaissance aircraft.

It was the navalised version of the RAF's Hart light bomber, and the Osprey prototype, which first flew in 1930, was in fact converted from its Hart counterpart.

The Osprey had folding wings and was available with undercarriage or floats. A total of 129 were built in four marks between 1930 and 1935, replacing Flycatchers in Flights 404 and 409, and joining Nimrods in 800, 801 and 802 Naval Air Squadrons.

Front-line service for the Osprey ended in favour of the Blackburn Skua just a few months before the outbreak of World War II. Carriers equipped with the type during the 1930s were HM ships Courageous, Furious, Glorious, Eagle, Hermes and Ark Royal.

In addition flights served in the East and West Indies, South Africa, with capital ships in the Home Fleet and on board cruisers in China, the Mediterranean and Home Fleet.

Finally relegated to target-towing and training, the Osprey was declared obsolete in 1940 but lingered on on the strength of 780 Squadron until early 1942.

The Hawker Osprey was powered by the Rolls-Royce Kestrel engine, the final version – the Mark IV – having the 640hp Kestrel V. With wheeled undercarriage, the Osprey IV was capable of a maximum speed of 176mph, a climb rate of 1,650ft a minute, and an endurance of 2 hours 15 minutes. It had a service ceiling of 25,000ft. The Floatplane's speed was 169mph, climb rate 1,300ft a minute and ceiling 22,000ft.

Both versions were armed with a fixed Vickers gun and a Lewis gun in the rear cockpit.

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Letters



JACK

... WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE THEN
-OVER THE WAVES TO MY SAILOR BRAVE
BORNE ON THE WINGS OF MY LOVE
MY HEART WILL BE FOREVER THINE
PLEASE SAY YOU'LL BE MY VALENTINE.

SICK! SICK! SICK! -

SICK!

SMELL! S-I-C-K SICK!

YOUR
SPELLING
HAS
IMPROVED!



Tiny knew the tricks

ANYONE who spent time at RNDQs in Portsmouth can't forget CSgt Tiny Hall.

While there in 1957 in R Class, we cleaned the weighted rifles used for rifle drill with emery cloth. I got the idea to steal a piece to clean my tin gear.

We had to use brick dust mixed with water and it was very time consuming, but the emery cloth worked great.

On Saturday morning, two days before I was due to be released, we were mustered on the parade ground having our first of two cigarettes for the day and CSgt Hall was walking between the ranks and I could feel him stop behind me.

He asked me if I had dropped anything and I said I didn't think so. He said "OK". After our cigarette, which we never got to finish, we had to double time to the cookhouse and pick up our tray of food and then enter the cell block. Tiny told me to wait behind. He said I hadn't dropped anything, but he saw the piece of emery cloth sticking out of the back pocket of my No 8s. I explained that I'd used it to clean the rifles and had put it in my pocket by mistake.

He said: "Don't play the old sailor with me - I've seen every trick in the book in here. You were using the emery cloth to clean your tin gear - right?"

I replied that I was. He asked when I was due to be released and I told him Monday. He said: "Carry on Benbow 64."

Saturday and Sunday night I couldn't sleep thinking he'd put me on report - but he didn't and I left Monday morning.

He was strict but fair, and had eyes like a hawk. He missed nothing. - **Jock McGaffrey**, Lago, Italy.

Letters to the Editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication. email correspondents are also requested to provide this information

Strange tale of mules and matelots

LEAFING through the ship's magazine of the Cardigan Bay's 1958-59 commission one finds an account of a curious episode when 20 sailors of the Far East Fleet co-operated with 81 Company, Royal Army Service Corps in Mule Train(ing).

In what were then the New Territories of Hong Kong, close to the Chinese border, the intrepid sailors took two days to get acquainted with their charges. "Bonding" was not yet an in-word, but this was the main objective, achieved by grooming and sweet-talk.

As a commentator said afterwards: "When all the stubbornness and ingenuity of the experienced mule is matched against the indiarubber qualities of the British matelot, who wins? You guess..."

However, much was achieved in the next two days' exercise. Matelots and mules, mostly together, climbed to a height of 2,500ft - twice - and the sailors soloed on the eastern side of Tai Mo Shan (the Sergeant major was so impressed he bought the beer). A lot was learnt: "One mule is very particular about his distance from the next when walking in line, hence the station-keeping had to be particularly accurate..."

The final day was spent in one of those short cuts that turn out to take longer than the regular route, and the matelots arrived complaining of sore fetlocks and

weary hindquarters - bonding indeed.

One is tempted to say they were spacious days, when the lads could be spared for a week or so to go off on a half-serious jolly of this sort. Reading between the lines of *Navy News* it is clear there is still a good deal of fun to be had, even if it is more compressed and time-managed - but no, perhaps it don't blow *quite* like it used to... - **Rear Adm J. R. Hill**, Bishop's Waltham, Hants.

Band of brothers

I HAD four brothers and we all served in the RN between 1943-54. However, I only met up with one of them after I joined in 1947 to train in HMS Valiant.

That was on top of the gangway when a voice said: "Hello, brother - let me help with that kitbag and hammock, have you got any tickler?" But he made up for it - I think I was the best fed trainee of that class of '47. The pusser's duff was very filling - **S. E. Doughty**, Nuneaton.

Scuttling of Sirius

I WAS interested to read about HMS Sirius's part in the Battle of Trafalgar (December issue).

This must be the ship which was one of a squadron of four frigates lost after an action in Grand Port, Mauritius in 1810. She ran aground. Her crew preferred to burn her rather than see her fall into French hands.

While serving in the radio station HMS Mauritius in 1973, our sub aqua club dived on the wreck. I now have a square section bronze nail about 8in long marked with a broad arrow. Visibility on the bottom was poor. The Wardroom had a large silver cigar box showing the harbour in relief and where the four wrecks lay. This had been presented to the Royal Navy by the sugar planters when the colony had been granted independence. - **J. Quinlan**, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

The 5th Rate HMS Sirius was built at Deptford in 1797 and destroyed on August 24, 1810. - **Ed**

Lest we forget - A is for apples

YOUR Swordfish cutaway (December issue) gave me a chance to look for a part of the Stringbag's anatomy which escaped me during my time as an observer in the grand old vehicle in 1941-43. Where was the gravity tank? Alas, I still couldn't find it.

The Stringbag took off on fuel supplied to the engine from this mystical vessel which had to be emptied. It took about half an hour. Then the pilot should switch over to the main tank - which is shown on the cutaway. Alas, pilots were not, in the view of most observers, very good at remembering - and then the aircraft was prone to plunging irretrievably into the "oggin" or whatever else lay beneath.

So all observers were told, when the half hour was nearly up, to give the pilot's head a whack with a newspaper, glove or whatever was to hand and bellow "Over to main".

I was with my first squadron in Canada when our CO's observer forgot this ritual - and the Stringbag did as expected and entered the water off Nova Scotia. All were rescued.

When a fellow called John Junor started a magazine called *Flight Deck* I supplied him with the following poem:

A is for Apples, which Newton said

Gravity caused to drop on his head.

Remember this or, like Peter and John,

You'll go in the drink with your trousers on.

For apples which flew on gravity tank

Agreed with Newton - and duly sank.

- **Tommy Thompson**, Wivenhoe, Essex.

RE your excellent illustration of the Stringbag, may I correct your ID of item 20 as "rear gunner/radio operator"?

The matelot who flew in the rear cockpit of all multi-seat Naval aircraft at that time was called a Telegraphist Air Gunner (TAG). Your mistake was not all that surprising, as even during World War II very few people outside the Fleet Air Arm knew who they were or what they did. This fact was sometimes very useful to escape attending Divisions or other parades!

After the war they became Telegraphists (Flying) or Tel(F) and later Aircrewmen (ACMN)

who are still at the sharp end of most Naval air operations, as were their forefathers. - **J. B. Griffin**, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham.

I WAS interested to see your description of the Douglas Skyraider AEW 1 (December issue), particularly as I served at RN Air Station Culdrose from 1959-62.

Thus I saw the Skyraiders in front line service with 849 Sqn and their successors, the Fairey Gannet AEW 3, first with 700G Trials Squadron and then with 849 as the Skyraider replacements.

However, although 849 was undoubtedly the last front line fixed wing squadron completely equipped with piston engined aircraft, the Douglas Skyraider was most certainly not the last fixed wing piston engined aircraft to see front line service in the FAA.

Also at Culdrose at that time was 831 Squadron. This was the Navy's radio warfare squadron and had some extremely hush-hush equipment thrown into the air in a peculiar assortment of aircraft. Thus it had the last Sea Venoms in front line service, the last Gannet AS4s in front line service, probably the only Sea Vampires in front line service and, up until about 1963, a couple of piston-engined Grumman Avengers (known to all and sundry as "chuff boxes").

The squadron may also have had one, perhaps two, Percival Sea Princes. I am told that one of the Avengers ended up in the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

For a while I was on Station Flight, which was in the next hangar to 831. We had, in addition to a De Havilland Dominie (Dragon Rapide) and a couple of Gannet T5s (trainer versions of the AS4), half a dozen Boulton Paul Sea Balliols. These were small trainer aircraft, rather like the piston-engined Provost but with a Rolls Royce Merlin engine up front. They were, I recall, used to acclimatise jet-trained pilots bound for 849 Sqn.

Thus I think that I must have worked on just about the last Merlin engined aircraft in active use in Britain's armed services. - **P. A. Green**, Dover.



No. 559 47th year

Editorial & Business address:

Leviathan Block,
HMS Nelson, Portsmouth,
Hants, PO1 3HH

Editor: Jim Allaway

Deputy Editor: Anton Hanney

Assistant Editors:

Dominic Blake & Mike Gray

Business Manager: Anne Driver

Editorial Lines...

Telephone: 023 9229 4228

Telephone: 023 9272 4163

(Mil 24163)

Telephone: 023 9272 4194

(Mil 24194)

Fax: 023 9283 8845

email: edit@navynews.co.uk

Business Lines...

Switchboard: 023 9282 6040

Subs & Accounts: 023 9282 6040

Distribution: 023 9272 5136

Adv: 023 9272 5062/9282 6040

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email: enquiries@navynews.co.uk

web: www.navynews.co.uk



Cockleshell memorial attacked

I HAVE just returned from the Gironde area of France, having discovered that the memorial to the "Cockleshell Heroes" on the coastal path at St George de Didonne has been defaced.

As may be seen from my photograph, two of the metal plates on the left hand panel, the top one marking Operation Frankton in December 1942, and the bottom one commemorating "Coalfish", one of the units involved, have been broken off.

Since I holiday each year in this area, I will be pleased to help in any way I can. - **P. L. Nash**, Bury St Edmunds.

One of our paintings is missing

SOME years back I painted some conventional submarines alongside at HMS Dolphin.

When Blockhouse paid off no one could tell me where the painting went.

The picture was reproduced in the Navy calendar and I enclose a copy.

Perhaps Navy News could help resolve the mystery? I was a bit sad as I believe the picture (an oil) to be one of my best. The Submarine Museum does not have it, nor was it offered to them by the Mess. – Vice Admiral Sir Roderick Macdonald, Braes by Portree, Isle of Skye.



Letters

Relief available on duty trips

WITH REFERENCE to CPOMEA Carter's letter (January issue) I can sympathise with his point regarding paying for food and accommodation whilst working away from the normal place of work.

He is wrong, however, to think that all businesses pay more than 22.3p per mile for using personal transport on company business. Also, is he aware that as well as the mileage allowance he receives he may be able to claim tax relief for using his car for duty trips?

The Inland Revenue set authorised mileage rates each year based on the average motoring costs (insurance, road fund licence, fuel and oil, servicing and repairs, depreciation of the vehicle etc) for a range of car engine sizes: up to 1,000cc, 1,001 to 1,500cc, 1,501 to 2,000cc and over 2,000cc.

For each engine range there are two rates, a higher rate for the first 4,000 business miles and a lower rate for each business mile over 4,000.

Where an employer pays less than the Inland Revenue's authorised rate of mileage to those who use their own vehicles for business journeys tax relief can be claimed.

Details of the authorised rates and how to calculate any tax relief can be found in the Inland Revenue booklet IR.125 (Using your own car for work).

The booklet, which is very easy to follow, is obtainable from Tax Offices or from the Inland Revenue Orderline, 0845 7 646646. Maybe copies should be held by UPOs for distribution. – J. Phillips (ex FCPO Writer), Chesham, Bucks.

Dolphins debut



IN THIS centenary year of the submarine in the Royal Navy, you may be interested in this photograph of the probable pattern from which the "kissing kippers", the metal uniform submarine qualification badge, evolved.

This heavy brass badge measures 21in X 7in and depicts a pair of dolphins (note ears), naval anchor and King Edward's crown and is believed to have been cast at Portsmouth Dockyard around 1910 at the request of Cdre Roger Keyes, Commodore Submarine Flotilla, for use in the Wardroom aboard his Portsmouth headquarters ship, the de-engined sloop HMS Dolphin.

Subsequent Flag Officers Submarines moved ashore to Fort Blockhouse, Gosport and FOSM's Wardroom table centrepiece transferred with them.

Early post war, FOSM HQ transferred to Northwood and it is not clear whether or not this badge remained at HMS Dolphin, although it is thought likely. – R.Fry, Weymouth.

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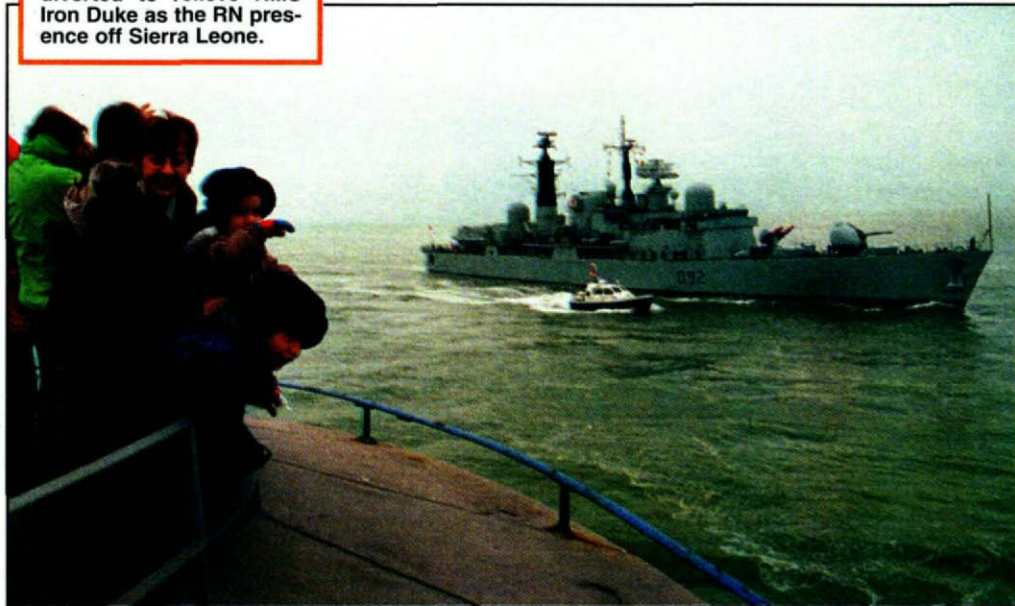


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Liverpool cuts it fine

FOR THE second year running, HMS Liverpool was the last ship in the Fleet to return home for Christmas, getting in with three days to spare after an eventful three months.

The destroyer, escorting HMS Invincible, was instrumental in saving lives after the Greek ferry Express Samina sank, and while on her way home in October she was diverted to relieve HMS Iron Duke as the RN presence off Sierra Leone.



● HMS Liverpool enters Portsmouth Harbour – the last ship home for Christmas.

Energy schemes win recognition

TWO Navy organisations have been recognised for their efforts in saving energy and water – which in turn have led to significant cost savings.

The Commander-in-Chief Fleet (CINCFLEET) organisation and the Royal Marines Headquarters (RMHQ) were assessed under the Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme, administered by the Institute of Energy.

And the Institute was impressed with a range of schemes, such as:

- Solar water heating arrays at Norton Manor Camp RM, heating accommodation and a swimming pool – water can be heated up to 95°C on a sunny day, even in sub-zero temperatures
- Combined heat and power

systems which produce free hot water as a by-product of generating electricity

■ Ambient energy systems, such as at RM Condor, again producing hot water while using hi-tech heat pumps to transfer heat from a solar heating element in the roof

■ Waterless urinals, at Northwood, RM Poole, Norton Manor Camp and RMB Bickleigh, saving up to £150 annually per urinal.

■ Rainwater collection systems, using the water to flush through toilets and urinals.

■ Aerating spray taps and showers, which save up to 70 per cent of the water through the taps, and 50 per cent in the showers, compared to normal fittings.

S-boat takes to the road for charity

DON'T be surprised if you see a nuclear submarine – built with RAF help using World War II techniques – making its way slowly down the A15 in April.

The scaled-down version of the Swiftsure-class boat is being built at RAF Waddington by CPO Gary Rawsthorne and a handful of RAF personnel.

And when it is completed, the 20ft model will be pushed by a group of RN people from Lincoln to London, where, after a brief pause at the Ministry of Defence headquarters in Whitehall, it will move on to the

Imperial War Museum to go on display.

Gary is creating the model to raise money for research into a cure for leukaemia, and to draw attention to the fact that it is the centenary of the RN Submarine Service.

Staff at RAF Waddington were keen to practise old airframe construction techniques on the boat, building an aluminium frame then adding mesh and dope to create a waterproof skin.

Two teams of four will set off from Lincoln careers Office on Monday April 23, and they hope to reach MOD Main Building in London by the Friday of that week.

■ Internetstamps has produced a range of first day covers to mark the centenary, which it is hoped will raise up to £20,000 for the RN Submarine Museum in Gosport.

Featuring the official Post Office stamps, the covers range in price from £7.95 through £9.95 for those actually carried aboard a Trident submarine, to covers signed by five World War II COs, which will cost £75, all with £1.35pp.

Contact Internetstamps at Church House, 136, Sandgate Road, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2BY, credit card orders on 01303 850688, or at internetstamps.co.uk

Medal will fill gap in awards

OPERATIONS by British Forces undertaken since January last year will now be recognised by the award of the Operational Service Medal. It will replace the award, in such cases, of the General Service Medal 1962.

The Queen has approved the issue of the OSM where a separate campaign medal – such as the Gulf Medal – is not warranted and where the operation in question does not qualify for such awards as a

UN or NATO medal.

Each operation for which the OSM is issued will attract a different medal ribbon, the basic colours being the same but with the addition of coloured stripes to indicate different theatres.

The GSM will continue to be issued for Northern Ireland and air operations over Iraq.

The Queen has also approved the concept of a humanitarian and peace-keeping medal for Service people and civilians where such operations do not warrant issue of an OSM or are not the subject of a UN medal.

Eligibility for the issue of each medal will be decided by representatives of the Cabinet Office, Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office and Home Office.

Dinner marks end of Herald

A FINAL Mess dinner to mark the decommissioning of HMS Herald will be held on May 31.

The function, open to past and present Commanding Officers, members of the Wardroom and WOs, will be in the Wardroom of HMS Drake.

The evening will cost some £25-£30, and a £15 deposit made payable to "HMS Herald Wardroom Mess Fund" will be required with replies.

Replies should go to HMS Herald f.a.o. Lt Atkinson, Navigating Officer, and should reach the ship – currently on deployment – by April 9.

Medical centre planned

THE CENTRE for Defence Medicine is due to open on April 2 following a Service Level agreement between the Ministry of Defence, the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust, the University of Birmingham and the University of Central England.

The centre of excellence

for medical training and education will be in Birmingham, taking over the training functions of the Royal Defence College at Gosport.

Over the next few years the number of medical students at the new centre will grow to 800 and those involved with clinical care will increase to 300-400.

Submarines could start to rejoin Fleet by summer

ROYAL Navy nuclear submarines with new pipework could be back in service by the summer as a result of a repairs programme which is expected to last for most of this year.

When HMS Tireless was forced out of last year's global deployment, Naval Task Group 2000, she made for Gibraltar, where it was discovered that cracking had caused a small leak in the reactor coolant system.

Checks were carried out on the six other Trafalgar-class boats, and the five Swiftsure-class submarines, which revealed that six more were showing signs of the same problem.

Of the five unaffected submarines, HM ships Trenchant, Spartan and Sceptre were already in refit, and Sovereign was undergoing a period of maintenance, which left HMS Triumph as the only operational hunter-killer.

The four-strong Trident-missile submarine fleet is unaffected.

HMS Torbay, already in refit, will be one of the first submarines to undergo the rectification work.

Frigate bound for India

TYPE 22 frigate HMS Cumberland is to represent the Royal Navy at the Indian Navy's international fleet review in Bombay, now formally known as Mumbai.

The review, which helps commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of India, is expected to attract ships from more than 20 navies to the port.

The Indian Navy also sees it as an opportunity for professional and informal gatherings under the banner of "Bridges of Friendship".

As Navy News went to press, Cumberland was nearing the end of a period of enforcing UN sanctions in the Gulf.

The Devonport-based ship is expected home in the early spring.

E-Blueys get even better

AN IMPROVED electronic bluey service – E-Bluey – should be up and running by the summer.

By then, not only will there be a rapid two-way service for messages up to four pages long, introduced last month, but by the summer the service can also include scanned photos, drawings and text.

More than 35,000 have already been sent – for details, see www.bfpo.org.uk and click on the e-bluey link.

Life-savers are rewarded

AN OFFICER who plunged into the surf to save a drowning sailor has been awarded a commendation for his bravery.

AB Andrew Lane had been in a boat party from the survey ship HMS Roebuck, carrying out preparations for a major NATO exercise on the Portuguese coast.

As conditions deteriorated rapidly, a freak wave capsized the boat and damaged the engine, so Lt Cdr Graham Mimpriss took charge of an inflatable boat from the ship to rescue the shore party and tow off their boat.

Andrew waded out to try to reach a gun-line, but was caught in a rip tide which began to pull him under.

As the inflatable got close to the drowning man, another huge wave knocked it away, so Graham dived in and helped Andrew ashore

through the surf.

Andrew said: "He knows how much I appreciate what he did. I didn't have much strength left by the time he got to me."

■ Two Belgian sailors have been rewarded for jumping into the River Thames to rescue a woman hanging from a fender between the Belgian warships BNS Crocus and BNS Lobelia in July 1999.

PO Suski and Ship's Diver Thierry were presented with Testimonials from the Royal Humane Society by First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Michael Boyce in recognition of their efforts last July.

The woman, who was slipping out of consciousness when rescued – made a complete recovery.

The award is rarely received by foreign nationals, the pair being the first Belgians to be honoured in this way.

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● Able Seaman Andrew Lane (left) with his rescuer, Lt Cdr Graham Mimpriss.



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UNATTACHED Lady garden designer, classical musician, natural personality seeks Naval gentleman, 34+ penpal/partner. **Box Feb 2**

NIKKIY, 23 Looking for a friend to be there for. **Box Feb 3**

FEMALE, 31. GSOH, likes Man Utd, Playstation. Seeks male 28+. **Box Feb 4**

TWO GEORGEOUS female flight attendants seeking penpals. WLTW funloving 30-40's. **Box Feb 5**

KATHY 40's Attractive, petite, GSOH Likes travel, socialising. **Box Feb 6**

WIDOW 45 seeks naval/marine male penfriend 40-45. Photo appreciated. **Box Feb 7**

ATTRACTIVE female 35, slim. Seeks Officer for friendship. Honesty, photo essential. **Box Feb 8**

ROBERT 36, Sailor. Likes travel, cars, motorcycles. Seeks female penfriend 30-45. **Box Feb 9**

CHERIE, attractive blonde. WLTW naval/marine male for friendship/relationship. Photo appreciated. **Box Feb 10**

SINGLE mum, 36. WLTW male service penfriend 30-40 GSOH. **Box Feb 11**

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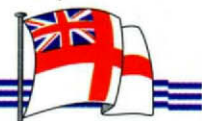
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Please note: We can take no responsibility for the nature or source of the replies received.

You must be over 18 to advertise in this column.



People in the News



Chief on engineering award's shortlist

A TALENTED Chief Petty Officer from HMS Collingwood has been shortlisted for the Young Woman Engineer of the Year Award.

CPO Karen Phillips, from Gosport, is one of four candidates nominated for the prestigious award from the Institution of Incorporated Engineers.

All of Karen's technical education has been through the

Royal Navy. She gained her BTEC and HNC in electrical and mechanical engineering at HMS Collingwood and her Artificer Apprenticeship was completed in HMS Manchester.

She said: "From a young age I have always been interested in how things work, so I knew



● CPO Karen Phillips at work in HMS Collingwood.

an engineering apprenticeship in the Royal Navy would fulfil my career requirements." The winner of the IIE's Young Woman Engineer Award 2000

was due to be announced at a ceremony in London as *Navy News* went to press and the result will appear in the next issue.

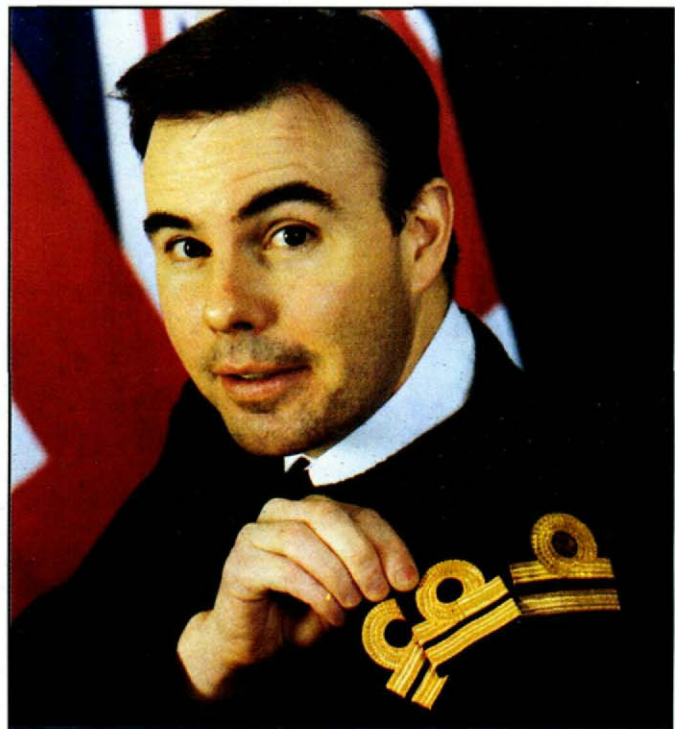
John joins RN after 14 years in Reserve

AFTER 14 years in the Royal Naval Reserve, Lt John Welsh has fulfilled his ambition of joining the Royal Navy by taking up the appointment of WE Training Manager at HMS Collingwood.

John is a chartered engineer who joined the RNR in 1987 and became a communications officer. He has spent the last three years on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) working on the Northwood Public/Private partnership.

Before that, his Reserve service took him to sea for a month in HMS Ark Royal during Operation Deny Flight in 1994 and to Norfolk, Virginia, on an exchange programme, in 1997.

John (pictured below) said: "I had always wanted to join the Royal Navy and I am really pleased that the opportunity for me to transfer from the RNR to the RN has been possible."



● **CONGRATULATIONS:** Lt Cdr Paul Callaghan is presented with a cake by Cdr Richard Buckland, CO of HMS Lancaster, after clocking-up his 3,000th flying hours during trials in the ship.

Paul clocks-up his 3,000th flying hour

FLEET Air Arm officer Lt Cdr Paul Callaghan passed a major aviation milestone when he logged his 3,000th flying hour.

Paul is a member of 700M Naval Air Squadron, the Merlin Intensive Flying Trials unit based at RN air station Culdrose in Cornwall, and he clocked-up his 3,000th hour during trials on board the Type 23 frigate HMS Lancaster.

To mark the occasion a cake was presented by Cdr Richard Buckland, Commanding Officer of HMS Lancaster, and it was shared by Lt Cdr Callaghan with members of the embarked flight's engineering team.

Chris is following in Dad's footsteps

ONE OF the proudest parents at the latest passing out parade in HMS Raleigh at Torpoint, Cornwall, was Petty Officer Martin Pinder.

His son Christopher decided to follow his father's footsteps by joining the Royal Navy and his Dad was there to see him in the parade at the end of his eight weeks of basic training at HMS Raleigh.

By coincidence, PO Pinder is an instructor at the catering school at HMS Raleigh so he didn't have to go far to watch the passing out parade.

He said: "I am extremely proud of Christopher's achievements and would recommend this choice of career to any young man or woman who is not afraid of hard work and is looking for adventure and the opportunity to travel."

● **PROUD:** PO Martin Pinder and his son Christopher.



People in the News



● **ARTIST:** Andrea Wood and the Rev Mike Brotherton show off some of the paintings on display at RN Air Station Culdrose.

Andrea's talent on display

STAFF at RNAS Culdrose have been raising cash for relief work in Mozambique by enjoying the artistic talents of a civilian employee.

Andrea Wood, who works in the WO & Senior Rates Mess, organised an exhibition of her oil, pastel and watercolour paintings in the chapel of St Peter and St Paul at Culdrose with the help of the Rev Mike Brotherton.

And a percentage of sale proceeds were donated to the Tri-Service Appeal which sponsors aid work in Mozambique.

Angela comes from a truly Naval background – her father, mother and sister all served at the air station during their careers in the Royal Navy.

The exhibition was a great success and Angela is hoping to develop her skills and make painting and drawing a full-time career.

New man at NAAFI

NAAFI has appointed a new Chief Executive with a wealth of experience in commercial management, finance, property and retailing.

Neil McCausland was the Managing Director of C&A UK and before that he was Head of Change at Marks & Spencer.

Neil (40) will become NAAFI's youngest ever Chief Executive next month when he takes over from Geoffrey Dart, who becomes NAAFI Chairman.

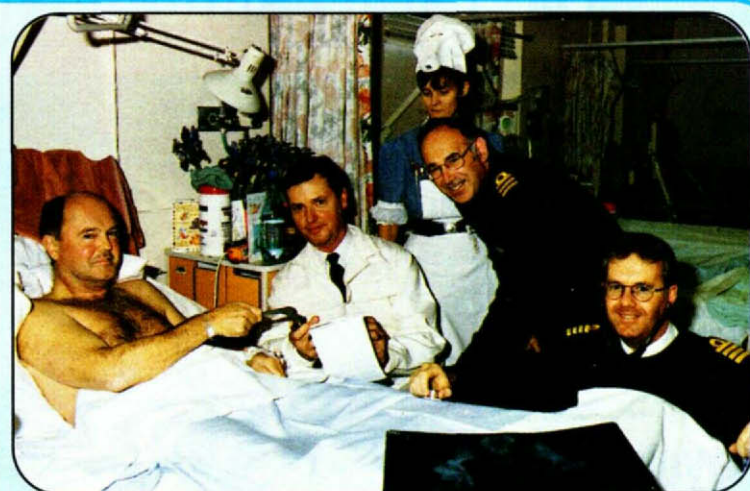
Hip inspection catches engineer on the hop!

SEASONED Weapons Trials Officers like Lt Cdr Eric Haskell expect new equipment to be tested as soon as possible after installation.

But he was in for a shock when an inspection team turned up at the Royal Hospital, Haslar, to see how his replacement hip was performing!

A Senior MCTA Trials Team, including Capt Graham Peach, Cdr Rod Passingham and Lt Cdr Jim Darling visited him in hospital for an installation inspection, followed by a full report of failing items!

Lt Cdr Haskell, Trials Platform Manager in the new Maritime Commissioning, Trials and Assessment Organisation at Portsmouth Naval Base, is pictured with his colleagues, and Haslar staff Surg Cdr Gwynne Howell and PONN Lynn Christophers.



Tom gives JHC a flying start

THE REMARKABLE organisational skills of S/Lt Tom Brady have earned him a commendation from the Commanding Officer of the newly formed Joint Helicopter Command.

With the introduction of the JHC in October last year, command of the Commando Helicopter Force based at Yeovilton passed from CINCFLEET at Northwood to HQ Land at Wilton.

S/Lt Brady's commendation was presented to him by Brigadier Coward, the Deputy Commander of the JHC, at a Jungly Squadron wings parade.

Brigadier Coward said it paid tribute to the part which Tom had played in creating and implementing the necessary infrastructure to allow JHC HQ to service the pay and reporting requirements of its 900 Royal Navy, Royal Marines, RAF and Army personnel.

It was, he said: "A remarkable performance for one so junior."

The Joint Helicopter Command is led by Air Vice Marshal David Niven RAF.

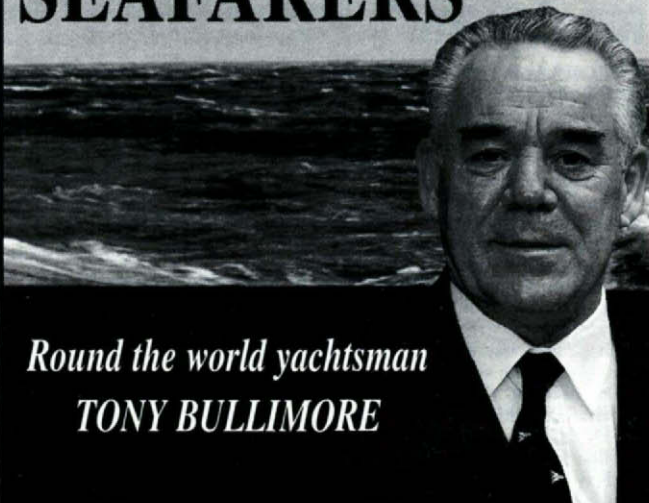
The organisation is responsible for the RAF Wessex, Chinook and Puma helicopters, Army Lynx and Gazelle aircraft, 16 Air Assault Brigade and the Royal Navy's Commando Sea Kings, nicknamed the 'Junglies' from their camouflage and their historic exploits in Borneo in the 1960s.



● **COMMENDATION:** S/Lt Tom Brady receives his commendation from Brigadier Coward, Deputy Commander of the Joint Helicopter Command.

If you or someone you work with in the Royal Navy are doing something newsworthy, why not let us know? Write to 'People in The News', Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH, e mail edit@navynews.co.uk or fax to 02392 838845.

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TONY BULLIMORE

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Warship engines? Diesel do nicely!

HMS IRON DUKE has broken a long-standing engineering record by clocking up more than 24,500 running hours on one of her diesel engines.

The Paxman Valenta 12RPA200Z is officially longest serving engine in the Fleet after beating the previous record held by HMS Norfolk with 24,501 running hours.

The record was beaten on Christmas Day, but the engine can't retire yet as HMS Iron Duke does not return from her current deployment to West Africa and the South Atlantic until the end of February.

By the time she gets back, three out of her four engines will have exceeded their design life of 24,000 hours. After the deployment, Iron Duke will head to Rosyth for refit where all three engines will be removed for overhaul.



● **IRON DUKE's M2 Diesel Section alongside F1 DG – the longest serving T23 diesel engine in the Fleet.** They are (back left) Lt Cdr Jules Philo, POMEA Dave Chandler, LMEM Yorkie Brice, Lt Smallie Boyes, POMEA(L) Blood Reid, CPO Arthur Seaton, CPO Buster Brown, MEM Vidal Faloon, MEM John Bramhall, POMEA Gorbie Micallef and (front left) POMEA(M) George Lynas, MEMs Billie Brown, Mac McClellan and Simmo Simpson.

IN BRIEF

Learning to drive safely

DRIVERS had the chance to sharpen their awareness and learn new safety skills during a course run by MOD Police at Portsmouth Naval Base.

The course, run by Constables Terry Garnett, Jo Thompson and Clive Wood, was a big success with those who attended.

The trio plan to run another course in the near future. For details, contact Jo Thompson on HMNB Portsmouth 25468 or 07850 540818.

Mayor visits Greenwich

THE LORD Mayor of Birmingham enjoyed a fascinating day out at the Royal Observatory and National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

Councillor Theresa Stewart was invited to Greenwich by the Director of the National Maritime Museum, Rear Admiral Roy Clare, who is a former Commanding Officer of HMS Birmingham.

Church role for Coventry

SAILORS from HMS Coventry will be playing a key role in a service at Coventry Cathedral on February 3 which marks the end of the Millennium Christingle season.

The Cathedral is holding a service in support of the Children's Society and members of the ship's company will join hundreds of youngsters from all over the British Isles in a spectacular procession of torches, and the ship is also planning its own service at sea.

Chaplain of the Fleet, the Ven Simon Golding, said: "This is a wonderful opportunity to link the work of the Church in the Royal Navy and the work of the Children's Society."

The Children's Society aims to improve the lives of children who are poor, homeless, or held in adult prisons.

£14m attraction to bring modern Navy into the historic dockyard

THE MODERN Royal Navy is to be brought into the heart of Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard with the opening of a £14 million attraction in May.

'Action Stations' will use a host of high-tech interactive simulators to test visitors' skills and an action-packed adventure film to showcase the highs and lows of life at sea.

So if you've ever wanted to know what it's like to steer a Type 23 frigate through a Force 9 gale or how you would cope with a white

knuckle ride in a Sea Harrier or Lynx helicopter, you'll have the chance to find out!

'Action Stations' is partly funded by the Millennium Commission and the admission fee will be £6.50 for adults, £5.80 for senior citizens and £4.80 for children aged between five and 16. It can also be included as part of a tour of the dockyard's other attractions.

For more details, visit the website www.flagship.org.uk or call Flagship Portsmouth's 24-hour information line on 023 9286 1512.

Veterans seek fairer pensions

THE ROYAL British Legion has put its weight behind a campaign for fairer Armed Forces pensions.

The veterans' charity is unhappy with the fact that people retiring at the same rank after the same length of service, but in different years, receive different levels of remuneration.

The anomaly arises because public sector pensions are linked to final salaries, so people retiring in years which follow periods of pay restraint can receive lower benefits.

The so-called 'pensions trough' which results had a particularly noticeable effect on those retiring in 1977 and, to a lesser degree in 1991.

RBL Secretary General Ian Townsend said: "The Legion fully supports this campaign. MPs and other Government employees have had their pensions schemes altered to eliminate these unfair variations and it is high time that this question of Armed Forces pensions is addressed."

But a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Defence told Navy News that changes were unlikely.

She said: "Troughs happen in all pension schemes. This is because

they must be linked to something at the time of retirement to determine their value.

"In the public sector this is a percentage of final salary multiplied by length of service, and this in turn is linked to the retail price index to make sure that the amount paid continues to grow over time.

"Other schemes are linked to the value of shares, or the rate of inflation, at the time of retirement so any scheme will be subject to 'troughs'.

"The reason that it is so evident in the Armed Forces is that it is possible to compare two people who joined on the same day, rose to the same rank and served for an

identical time.

"In the rest of the public sector it is extremely unlikely that two individuals will have followed exactly the same career path."

The Officers' Pensions Society has been working closely with the MOD and the Commons Defence Committee to help to ensure that any new Armed Forces Pension Scheme has as few loopholes and pitfalls as possible.

And the organisation is reviewing its membership policy in June with a view to representing all Service personnel on pensionable terms. For more details, write to Officers Pensions Society, 68 South Lambert Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL or e-mail memsec@officerspensionsoc.co.uk

Paymaster keeps key contract

A CONTRACT to administer the pensions of more than 340,000 veterans and the pay of 125,000 Serving personnel has been won by Paymaster.

It's the first major public sector contract to come up for renewal since privatisation and the new contract runs for nine years.

Charles Boyle, Personnel and Finance Director of the Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency, said: "We are delighted that Paymaster has won this contract against very strong competition. We look forward to building on the existing long-standing and positive relationship between the Armed Forces and Paymaster."



● Cdr Jamie McMichael-Phillips (centre) with Mr John Yapp, the British High Commissioner to the Seychelles, and members of the Seychelles Defence Force, Police and Fire Services.

Scott pays a visit to the Seychelles

A VISIT to Port Victoria in the Seychelles gave HMS Scott a break from her Indian Ocean deployment for a crew rotation and some well-earned rest and relaxation for the ship's company.

During the visit the ship held a reception on behalf of the British High Commissioner for 22 members of the Seychelles People's Defence Force and members of the local Fire and Police services.

The group of Seychellois, which included a graduate of the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, bomb disposal experts, anti-terrorist specialists and a hydrographic surveyor, have all undertaken training courses sponsored by Britain.

Before the guests left the Commanding Officer of HMS Scott, Cdr Jamie McMichael-Phillips handed over a consignment of surplus books to the Seychelles Police Service and National libraries.

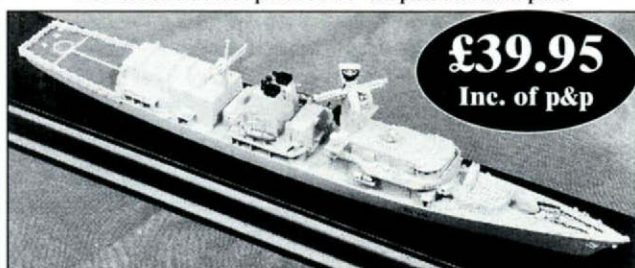
And he also presented University of Plymouth Post-Graduate Certificates to Lt Cdr John Mules and Lt Neville Smith, HM specialists who have studied extensively at the RN School of Meteorology and Oceanography at RN Air Station at Culdrose and also at the RN Hydrographic School in HMS Drake.

The certificates, in applied meteorology, rewarded the high course marks achieved by the pair during their time at RNAS Culdrose.

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Home run for HMS Campbelltown

HMS CAMPBELTOWN received a warm welcome from the people of her affiliated port when she arrived at Campbeltown on a wet and blustery morning.

The ship was greeted on the jetty by Naval Regional Officer, Commodore Angus Sandford, and the ship's company lost no time in re-establishing links with the town.

After the frigate had tied up, a party from the ship piled into a minibus and headed into Campbeltown where they helped to renovate the gardens of Broom Cottage, a

charitable drop in centre and community flat which provides a playgroup, child care courses and parenting groups.

On their last visit sailors from HMS Campbeltown built a picnic table and benches and Development Worker Lorraine Ley was delighted to see them back again.

She said: "They've helped us out a great deal in the past. It's amazing what you can achieve with all that extra manpower."

During the weekend, when the ship was open to visitors, some of the sailors went

to see the Springbank Distillery which provides HMS Campbeltown with a specially-bottled 12-year-old malt whisky.

On the Sunday of the weekend visit the CO, Captain Alistair Halliday, read the lesson at the old Kirk of Campbeltown, and the ship's football and rugby teams were in action against local teams.

HMS Campbeltown is taking part in Sea Wolf trials and will take charge of a 22-ship anti-submarine warfare exercise before sailing for a deployment to the Baltic, with visits to Poland, Latvia and Russia.



● HMS CAMPBELTOWN: The ship received a warm welcome on a visit to her affiliated port. Her next deployment is to the Baltic.

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Fearless overhaul proves uplifting

PORTSMOUTH ship repairers Fleet Support Ltd (FSL) are working on at least five jobs in one with the regular maintenance of the Royal Navy's veteran assault ship HMS Fearless.

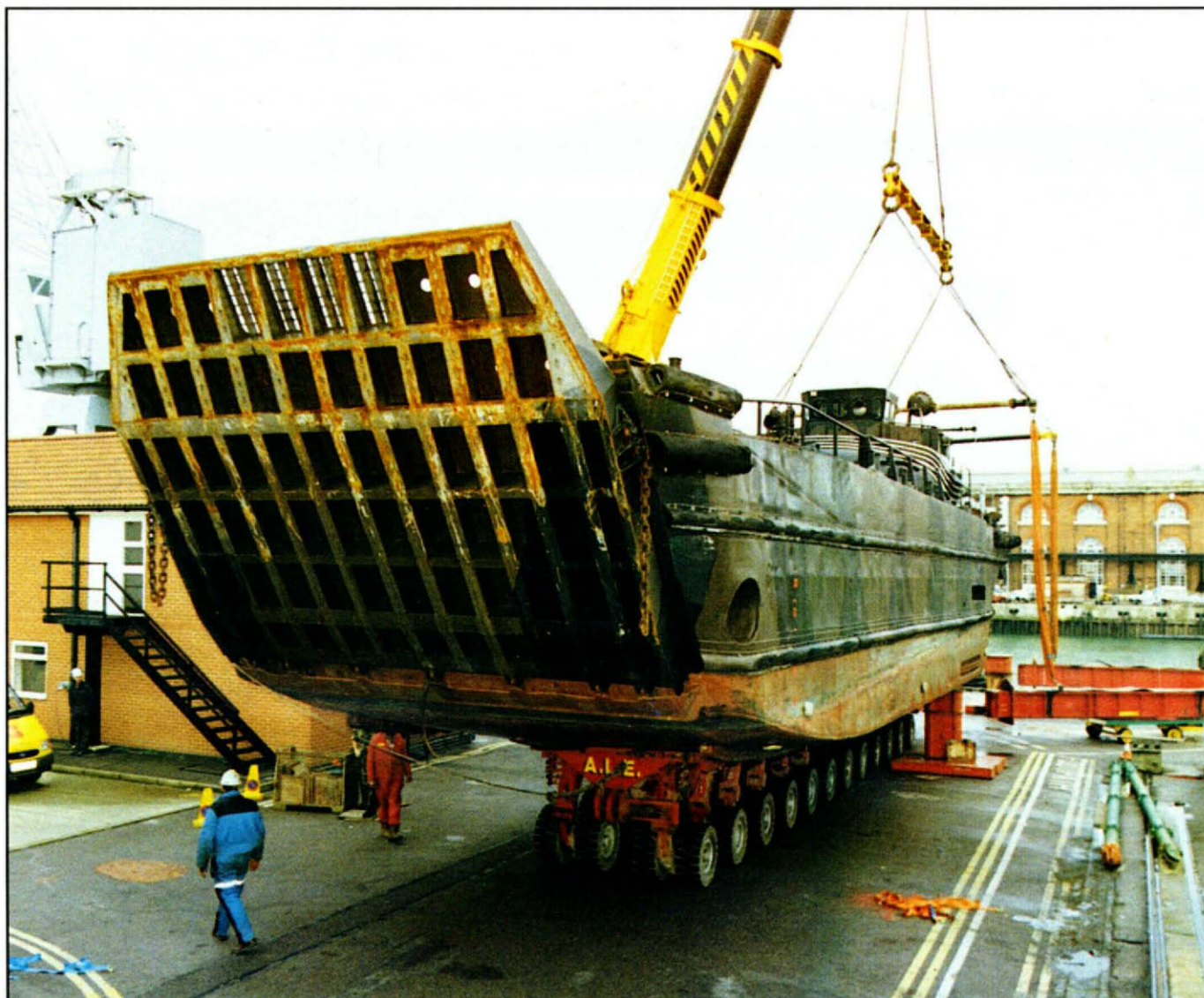
Besides a four-month package of work on the main ship, FSL will also be carrying out maintenance on the four large landing craft (LCUs) used by the Royal Marines.

The 30m landing craft, each weighing more than 100 tonnes, are being lifted out of the water for blasting, painting and an overhaul of their engines and hydraulics in FSL's huge undercover workshop.

When the work is complete the craft will be lifted back into the water for trials before they are floated back to their regular

home in the 35-year-old HMS Fearless.

Project Manager for the task, FSL's Peter Ashford, said: "Lifting the craft from the water and towing them through Portsmouth Naval Base will realise significant productivity benefits and demonstrate our capability to complete minor vessel maintenance as well as major warship work."



● **LIFT OFF:** A 100-tonne Landing Craft Utility (LCU) from HMS Fearless is lifted clear of the water on its way to FSL's huge covered workshop in Portsmouth Naval Base. All four LCUs from the ship are being taken in for an overhaul.

Leeds Castle is back in business



● **SPONSOR:** Lady Peggy Speed meets the ship's company of HMS Leeds Castle on the day of the ship's rededication in Portsmouth. The ship has deployed to the Falklands to take over from HMS Dumbarton Castle.



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For more information contact:

Commander John Prichard, Royal Navy, Chief Executive,
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email: cdr@navalclub.co.uk

HMS LEEDS CASTLE has returned to the Fleet after an eight-month refit in Rosyth and an arduous period of operational sea training.

The occasion was marked by a rededication ceremony at Portsmouth Naval Base which began with a formal parade inspected by Lady Peggy Speed, the original sponsor of the ship which she launched in 1981.

Other guests at the ceremony included the Mayor of Hastings, the Chief Executive of Leeds Castle in Kent, and Commodore Patrol Vessels, Diving and Fishery Protection, Commodore Barry Goldman.

A short religious service conducted by Monsignor Tom Burns, Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain to the Royal Navy, was followed by a celebratory lunch.

And Naval tradition was upheld with the cutting of a cake by Mrs Nicola Milburn, wife of HMS Leeds Castle's CO, Lt Cdr Philip Milburn, and SES Mark Deboer-Lloyd, the youngest member of the ship's company.

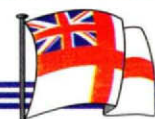
The ship is now in the Falklands where she has taken over from HMS Dumbarton Castle.



● **CAKE CUTTING:** Naval tradition is upheld by Mrs Nicola Milburn, wife of HMS Leeds Castle's CO, Lt Cdr Philip Milburn, and SES Mark Deboer-Lloyd, the youngest member of the ship's company.



Drafty: The Promotions Office



Now the promotion season lasts all year

THE LAST year has been yet another extremely busy one for the Promotions Office in Centurion Building - with a large number of staff changes and the first Able Rate to Leading Hand promotion boards.

The introduction of 'promotion by selection' at all levels now means that the promotion board 'season' runs almost continuously throughout the year.

In February and March Warrant Officer Boards sit, followed in May and June by the Second Open Engagement and Leading Hand promotion boards (running concurrently).

From the end of June and throughout July, Petty Officers are selected, and then, after a brief respite for summer leave, the Chief Petty Officer boards sit in September and October, followed by Charge Chief boards in November.

When a board is not actually sitting, the Promotions Office is either preparing for the next, or 'washing up' the last (or both!).

Each year the Promotions Office receives approximately 12,000 reports, every one of which is scrutinised to ensure correctness and that recommendations align with the written text.

Numbers play an important part in the promotion process; to determine how many personnel will be required for promotion, a series of calculations takes place.

Account is taken of known discharges, Officer extraction, Artificer extraction and increases (or in some cases decreases) in the 'requirement' which is set by the Director of Naval Manning.

On completion of each promotion board, the members of that board are invited to produce feedback on issues such as the quality of the candidates and the standard of report writing.

This feedback is then included in a 'wash-up' report that is promulgated to Commanding Officers at the end of the board season.

This important report contains guidance that should cascade down to all those involved in the report-writing process, so that future report-writing standards give qualified personnel the best

possible chance for selection at the board.

This year has seen the first full set of promotion boards selecting ratings using the new RORRS Record 3 (S3300C). One particular misconception regarding the use of the S3300C in the decision-making process concerns that of 'competences'.

This area has been a source of considerable misunderstanding. They are set for a particular job within a particular Unit, although personnel carrying out identical jobs in similar squadron ships, for example, should have similar competences set.

Therefore, an individual performing adequately in a particularly taxing job which has high set competences should not be compared to an individual in a less demanding job who is performing well, but whose competences have necessarily been set lower.

Board members are briefed to avoid comparison between different competence levels and to pay particular attention to Section 3, the 'potential' section, which



should guide their selection of candidates. The ultimate aim of the S3300C in the promotion process is to ensure that the best people are selected for promotion first, using potential as the major criterion.

Feedback from Board members thus far has indicated favourable support for the S3300C.

The five-year transitional phase between roster advancement and full selective promotion is now well underway.

At the next Able Rate to Leading Hand boards in 2001, 70% of the total promotion requirement will be taken from the top of the frozen advancement roster, with the remaining 30% of the requirement being

selected by a promotion board.

At this year's Leading Hand to Petty Officer promotion board, the ratio will be 50:50.

Warrant Officers and Chief Petty Officers play an active part in the selection process and are used as board members at the more junior Boards, (AB to LH, LH to PO).

Those Warrant Officers and Chief Petty Officers who have acted as board members have found the experience to be both interesting and rewarding.

Once full selection by promotion is underway, this will require running more than 70 Promotion Boards for promotion to Leading Hand and Petty Officer each year, and will involve a similar number of Warrant Officers and Chief Petty Officers to act as board members.

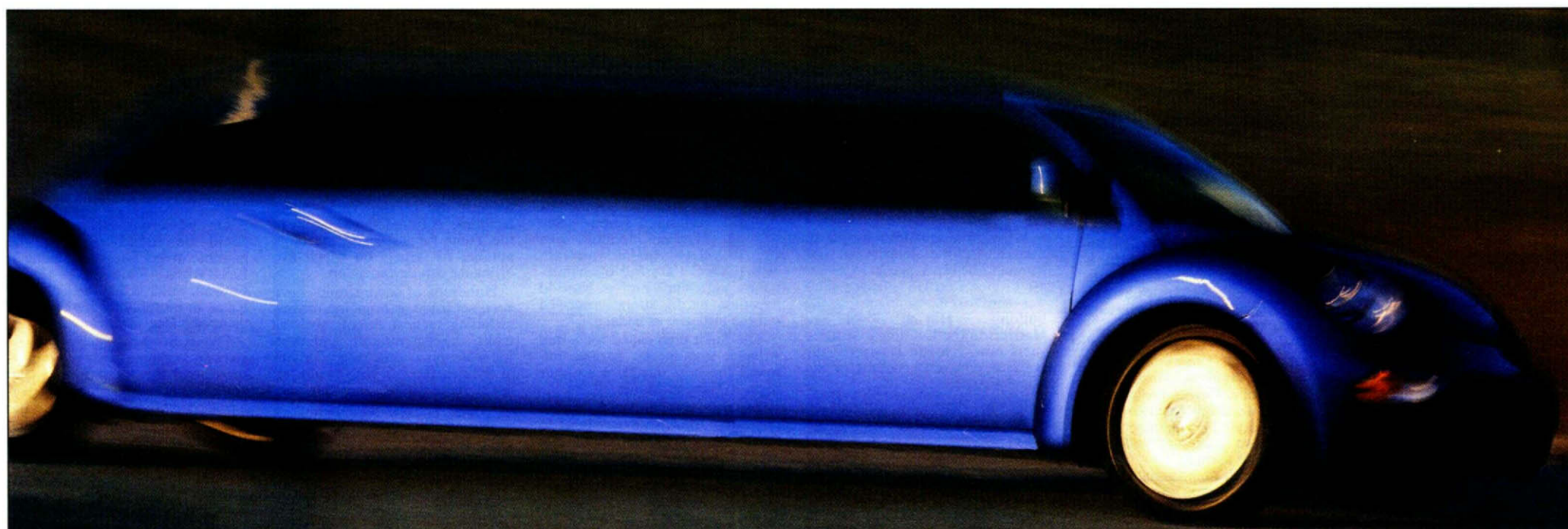
Situations vacant

CPO (Any) and AB (Any) DNR Wroughton. Shore billets based in Swindon. CPO as Trailer Commander and AB as driver. Both required in May for at least 18 months.

PO (Any) for HMS Gannet. A shore billet at Prestwick. Senior Rates' Mess Manager. Required immediately for 14 months.

LAEM(M) ITG for HMS Sultan. A shore billet at Gosport. Initial Course Instructor. Required A S A P for 12 to 24 months.

AB (Any) for DNR, RCHQ North. A shore billet at HMS Caledonia, Rosyth. Driver. Required from April for 18 months plus.



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Training mission to Arizona for the 'Top Guns' of 801 NAS ...

Harriers in action over wild West

SEA HARRIER pilots from 801 Naval Air Squadron are back at their base in Yeovilton, Somerset, after a month-long detachment to the USA. United States Navy Officer Lt Cdr Rob Bennett, an American on exchange with the Squadron, describes their exploits at Yuma, Arizona...

Jet noise shatters the desert air of Arizona as four Sea Harriers from 801 Squadron rocket overhead.

Flying at 300 feet and 500mph the ground below is a continuous blur of cactus and sagebrush.

The pilots ignore this, however, and focus instead on a mountain range looming up through the haze on the horizon.

With five miles to go until the jets reach the mountains, the flight leader scans across them for the best entry point. He has to plan quickly, as the flight will be there in less than 40 seconds.

The flight leader chooses a valley and guides his jet through it, rolling swiftly from wingtip to wingtip as he tracks between the rock walls on either side. His wingmen follow carefully, avoiding each other as well as the terrain.

The flight leader guides them higher into the mountains and sees the top of the ridge ahead. Cresting it, they each roll inverted and pull. Looking up for the ground, mild vertigo is instantly replaced by a surge of adrenaline as they suddenly face 7,500 feet of empty space.

The mountain range has simply ended, plunging away beneath them in a series of sheer cliffs. The jets comfortably settle into a 45 deg dive that brings them back down to the wide desert floor below. You can't see it looking at them, but everyone is smiling under their oxygen masks.

Returning to low level, they approach the bombing range. Each jet is carrying a single 1,000 lb high explosive bomb, configured with a high drag fin for low altitude release. The pilots look ahead to the target area, searching hard to visually acquire an enemy tank on which to unload their deadly cargo.

The flight leader spots a column of tanks and quickly adjusts his flight path directly at them. Through the heads up display, he watches as the weapon aiming cross draws near to the centre of the column.



● **SEA HARRIER:** An FA2 from 801 Naval Air Squadron at the USMC Air Base at Yuma, Arizona.

The instant his aiming cross overlays the target, his thumb smashes down the red weapon release button on the control stick. The Sea Harrier lurches as 1,000 lbs is ejected. As the bomb falls away the high drag fin on its tail deploys a small drag parachute, slowing it down to allow the jet to escape the blast.

All four Sea Harriers streak through the target area on the attack in quick succession. Looking back over their shoulders in a slight climb, each pilot strains to regain sight of his target in time to see the impact of the bomb.

Orange and black fireballs suddenly appear where the tank column once lay, dragging up angry black clouds of dust and explosive debris. The plywood 'tank' targets have been vapourized and after the dust settles, nothing but craters of blackened earth remain.

Welcome to the business end of 801 Squadron's recent detachment to Yuma, Arizona. Hosted by the US Marine Corps, the squadron spent a month in America flying a host of training missions, ranging from close air support to offensive counter air sorties.

The squadron also supported the USMC Weapons/Tactics Instructor course, flying missions against USMC Hornets and Harriers. With near perfect weather, the ranges around Yuma offered the ideal setting to accomplish maximum amounts of training while back in the UK, storms and floods pounded the country.

As a US Navy F/A-18 Hornet pilot on exchange flying with the Royal Navy, I found myself in the odd position of flying a 'foreign' warplane over my own country. Air traffic controllers no doubt had cause to wonder about the "Brit" pilot on the radio who did such an excellent job of impersonating a Yank accent!

When the squadron began to prepare for the detachment last summer, the obvious choice to create briefings on US airspace rules was the token American in the building. Having flown Sea Harriers in the UK going on three years now, I found it surprisingly hard to remember details of my home airspace.

It was especially difficult to come up with good reasons why we have such restrictive low level training rules and speed limits for

military jets in the States. Equally challenging was justifying why we fly everywhere on IFR flight plans.

Trying to explain US radar service was a non-starter, and when the discussion turned to defending why US football players wear pads there was the threat of violence!

On a more serious note, the briefings highlighted many aspects of UK flying that I've come to enjoy and wish I could bring home with me at the end of my tour - the UK low flying system is a national treasure to be guarded at all costs!

The squadron left the UK trailing seven Sea Harriers behind three RAF C-130's full of maintenance personnel and a Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft rounded out the airborne armada.

The flight plan called for a mid Atlantic stop in the Azores, followed the next day by a six-hour flight to Bangor, Maine.

The third day covered the entire breadth of the USA from Maine to Arizona in a single hop. The 3,000 mile journey took roughly six and a



TOP GUNS: CPOAEA Kippax and CCAEA Keam impersonate Maverick and Goose in the cockpit of an F-14A Tomcat at the show at MCAS Miramar, San Diego, where the movie 'Top Gun' was filmed. 801 NAS took a pair of jets to the show and took great pleasure in putting everyone straight on the origins of the Harrier!

half hours and I played tour guide on this leg, pointing out cities below and discussing historical aspects of each location, which my squadron mates were quick to point out was an easy task with such a relatively short history!

Once in Yuma, our Sea Harriers looked right at home alongside the USMC's AV-8B Harriers.

The Marine Corps Air Station at Yuma is host to three squadrons of AV-8B's, as well as the Marine Air Warfare Training School which conducts graduate level training of Marine aircrew, fighter controllers, and forward air controllers, utilising extensive bombing ranges around Yuma.

The school runs a Weapons Tactics Instructor course similar in objectives to the UK Air Warfare Instructor course and the airfield at Yuma was a spotters paradise with large numbers of Hornets, Harriers, EA-6B Prowlers, Cobras, Hueys, and Hercules aircraft. Incredibly, Yuma also operates as a civilian airfield with turboprop commuter aircraft and private Cessnas working into the mix.

With temperatures pushing 42 C maintenance personnel found even the most routine of tasks to be challenging. Blowing sand, dust and the odd scorpion in the tool kit all seemed to conspire against efforts to keep the jets flying. Even so, aircraft availability remained excellent throughout the detachment.

801 NAS provided both air-to-ground strike and red air in support of the WTI course as payback for our use of the Yuma range facilities. A tremendous benefit of the Yuma ranges lies in the large number of targets on which live ordnance can be expended.

Hundreds of square miles have been set aside as bombing ranges, including tactical targets such as tanks, derelict aircraft, and even full scale mock airfields graded out of the desert. 801 NAS made full use of these assets, expending over 22,000 lbs of high explosives.

Two of the squadron aircraft were equipped with the latest IN/GPS modification and this fit

was positively evaluated for its benefits in improving the Sea Harrier's bombing accuracy.

The USMC WTI course included a large-scale close air support exercise that featured live artillery combined with both ground and airborne forward air controllers. The airborne FAC's normally operated from Cobra attack helicopters, calling in artillery to mark targets.

As the white phosphorus artillery rounds blossomed in the target area, 801 Sea Harriers visually acquired and destroyed simulated enemy targets. In the air-to-air arena, 801 NAS contributed adversary support to oppose Marine Air Group strike packages.

Most of southeastern Arizona's airspace was set aside for this massive exercise with up to 30 aircraft airborne at the same time.

When not supporting the WTI course, 801 conducted several dissimilar air combat training missions against a variety of aircraft.

Chief among these were USAF F-16 assets from Luke Air Force base near Phoenix, while additional support came from the USMC's own 401 squadron, flying F-5E Tiger II aircraft out of Yuma.

Employing AMRAAM and it's Blue Vixen pulse doppler radar, the Sea Harrier has the nasty habit of surprising even the most capable adversary platforms.

A trip to the States wouldn't be complete without top quality liberty; and 801 NAS personnel took full advantage to explore the western USA.

On weekends 801 personnel could be found enjoying the nightlife in San Diego, gambling at Las Vegas, hiking the Grand Canyon, water-skiing the Colorado River, or even falling out of an airplane at a local skydiving club.

Flying in the American West gives an awesome sense of limitless space, and the weather, with 100 nm visibility and sunshine 330 days a year, combined with some of the best ranges in the world, will keep Royal Navy squadrons returning to Yuma in coming years.

The Association of Royal Navy Officers

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

ARNO is both an officers charity and a membership association which is open to serving and retired commissioned officers of the RN, RM, QARNNS, WRNS, and their Reserves. Formed in 1925, ARNO's primary purpose is to assist officers and their dependants in need with grants and bursaries from the proceeds of its assets, which exceed £3 million.

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US Navy pilots land at Boscombe

WHILE the Fleet Air Arm pilots of 801 NAS were flying over the American West four US Navy test pilots were taking to the skies over Boscombe Down near Salisbury.

The American airmen came to Britain for their final examinations after a year at the US Navy Test Pilot School at Paxtutent River, Maryland.

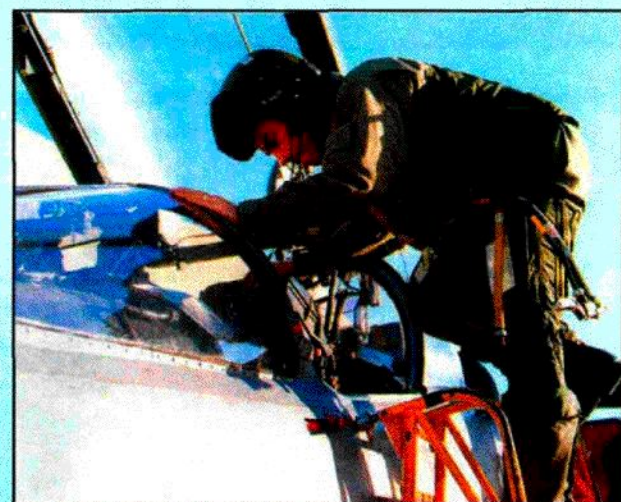
The airmen have all flown more than 20 different aircraft and during their stay at the Empire Test Pilot School at Boscombe they had to fly and report on jets which they had never flown before to pass the course.

Their US Navy Instructor, Lt Cdr Steven Schellberg, said: "Finding different aircraft that students have no experience with is a challenge.

"We divide the students up among several sites for their final exam and that's why we come to countries like Great Britain, France and Germany."

To pass the course the students have to write a 60-page aircraft test plan and execute it in four flights totalling six hours. And when the flying is done they have just 14 days to produce a 150 page formal technical report!

This may seem like a lot, but at this stage the worst is already over. Before their final week they will have completed 550 hours of academic study, 150 flight hours over 100 sorties and 25 technical reports on 20 different aircraft types!



● **TESTING TIME:** US airmen climb into the cockpit for a sortie from Boscombe Down, Wiltshire. Four American Student Test pilots spent a week in Britain to take their final exams.

... as carrier squadron commanders of tomorrow take flight

From total novice to aerobatics in 60 hours

THE JOINT Elementary Flying Training School – JEFTS – sets pilots for all three Armed Forces on their way.

"Joint" is something of a misnomer – although RAF College Cranwell acts as a hub, the RAF do their training at RAF Church Fenton, and the Army and Navy go to RAF Barkston Heath.

And even the Army and RN squadrons differ in approach – Army pilots, who will fly helicopters, clock up 40 hours in the air, while Navy candidates, most of whom will also go to helicopter training at Shawbury, fly 60 hours.

Around 60 Navy students pass through the Lincolnshire establishment each year on ten six-month courses, usually arriving with at best a few hours flying time, so the first five or six weeks is spent at Ground School, learning basics.

They then take to the air – there are no simulators at this stage of their training.

JEFTS uses a military version of the British Slingsby Firefly, fitted with a powerful 260hp engine, giving a rapid rate of climb (allowing more to be achieved during time aloft) and having the handy knack of gaining height during aerobatics, which makes it necessary for students to learn how to manage the throttle.

"We are teaching them the very basics of aviation and flying, whether they will go on to fixed wing or rotary," said Senior Naval Instructor Lt Cdr Kevin Potts.

"We send them solo after about 15 hours on the course, so they have got to have some innate ability as well – and we are examining their potential for further training."

Conscious of the cost of flying training, the Navy has a system of filters to ensure that only the most promising of students get through.

Flying aptitude tests are conducted before Dartmouth – all Navy pilots are officers – so only the best get through to Barkston Heath.

"If we want to chop someone, the cheapest place is before flying," said Lt Cdr Potts.

"So all the way down the process the potential for failure should decrease.

"By the time they have done 60 hours here we can pass them on to the next stage of flying training with some degree of confidence."

Skills to be mastered include straight and level flight, climbing and turning, flying circuits, flying out of circuits, and managing engine failure.

At 40 hours the Navy contingent move on to some of the 'fun' elements – aerobatics and formation flying, which students generally agree are the most challenging and rewarding parts of the course.

"We spend 45 hours telling them to keep away from other aircraft, then teach them to fly 10-15ft apart," said Lt Cdr Potts.

Safety checks, to ensure they can handle spins, stalls and aerobatics as well as navigate and safely fly the plane, must be passed before a final sortie, which may include anything they have learned at Barkston Heath – "an hour and 15 minutes of hard work", according to Lt Cdr Potts.

Air training school sets the standard

WITH bright yellow light aircraft buzzing across the blue sky and a ramshackle huddle of temporary buildings perched on rolling green grassland, Barkston Heath could be your average flying club.

But "flying club" is not a phrase they like to hear bandied round the place – and average it certainly is not.

For here, at a modest RAF airfield close to RAF College Cranwell, is where the Royal Navy's pilots of tomorrow cut their teeth, and though the operation is run by a civilian contractor – Hunting – those closest to the action are in no doubt that the training imparted is second to none.

"They have been running for the best part of five years, and I would say the standard of students as aviators is as good as, if not better than, in my time," said Cdr Andy Edney, the Senior Naval Officer at JEFTS.

"There is a huge amount of experience and talent. The majority of instructors are A-category, which is almost unheard of in military circles, and they have got an extremely capable aircraft; a powerful engine with a light airframe.

"We have got the ex-national aerobatic champion here in Alan Wade, the chief instructor of a historic aircraft company, Ft Lt Charlie Brown – a highly-renowned warbird display and test pilot – and Capt Robert Miller, the 2000 air racing champion.

"We have got a good crop of students in the pipeline, and I am sure we will be keeping up the standard – but it takes a time for them to get through, and there is no quick fix for flying training.

"I would say that JEFTS does not get the credit it deserves for its achievement.

"It has not got a very high visibility, and the fact that it is a civilian-run organisation means there is going to be an element of suspicion – not here, but from people who do not visit the place.

"Everyone who has called here in my time and that of my predecessor has walked away with their eyes opened."

The hierarchy of the organisation is complicated at first appearance – elementary flying training is controlled by the RAF, but the Navy has a vested interest through the Fleet Air Arm; qualified Navy flying instructors work day by day for a civilian company, which is itself under the umbrella of the RAF.

The military ethos is an essential dimension of the school, and that has been successfully addressed by Hunting, said Lt Cdr Kevin Potts, the Senior Naval Instructor.

"The majority of the staff here are military or ex-military – not exclusively, but to a large extent," he said.

"Instructors tend to fly with one squadron, which gives a degree of individuality and retains Service ethos and professionalism."

Capt David Wooldridge, Hunting's manager of JEFTS, said: "We really do try our best over the military ethos.

"We belong to the officers' mess, we wear short hair and wear uniforms, we have the same relationship with students as the military, and briefings are the same.



● A JEFTS Firefly is put through its paces over Lincolnshire.

"We keep asking the customer what we can do to improve the military ethos, because it's incredibly important to us that people coming in here go into a military-style establishment, not a flying club, and I genuinely feel we achieve that.

"And look at the level of experience – that gives us tremendous credibility. The RAF Central Flying School's exam wing have visited us four times, and we have always got 'good' in all areas. We cannot do any better."

Around 20 per cent of the instructors are serving military staff.

Lt Cdr Potts said he sees no problem in a RN instructor answering to civilians such as David Wooldridge and the Officer

Commanding the Naval squadron, Russ Brownridge, formerly a lieutenant commander with years of experience in the Wasp (which he describes as "character-building..."). Sea King, Wessex Mk 3 and Lynx, now with the civilian rank of captain.

"Like most people I came here trying not to, but finding it difficult not to, have preconceived ideas about civilians instructing military pilots," he said.

"But the guy that looked like a fast jet pilot had done 3,000 hours of civilian instruction, and the guy I thought had just stepped out of a Cessna had been teaching in a Hawk for six months. I got it 180 degrees wrong.

"I tell students here that the worst mistake they can make is to

think they they are getting a lesser service from a civvy. They are not."

The failure rate – or "leakage" from the funnel that leads to the front line – is low.

"That is not to say people do not have problems – it is unusual to find students who do not have difficulties with some areas of the course, but generally the calibre and determination of the students and of the staff pay off," said Lt Cdr Potts.

The JEFTS target is 15 per cent failure rate; the actual figure over the past few years has been around five to six per cent.

The early chop has prevented much wasted effort as it means that the vast majority of those who enter JEFTS leave it with their chosen career path still intact.

Next step leads to helicopters – or jets

During training, some students will show above-average flying ability, and the degree of spare mental capacity which marks out the potential fast-jet pilot.

"Then it's down to personality, because it is one of the toughest courses in the Navy," said Senior Naval Instructor Lt Cdr Kevin Potts.

"It takes a certain amount of grit and determination, coupled with the skills we have found or enhanced, for the pilot to advance to be a front-line Sea Harrier pilot."

These students will part company with the majority of their colleagues from the Barkston Heath course, heading north to RAF Linton-on-Ouse in Yorkshire.

There they will fly the more powerful Tucano trainer and, if successful, will eventually wind up at RAF Valley in North Wales to convert to jet aircraft.

Some students at Barkston Heath openly admit they would love to go on to Sea Harriers, and the general belief is that most of the rest harbour secret desires to fly the Navy's versatile fighter.

One student just completing the course, Lt Mark Humphries, summed it up: "I wanted to do fast jet, and it is still a possibility – I'm borderline, I think."

"But it is certainly not the end of the world if I get rotary – I quite fancy the Lynx."

"I've been impressed by the instruction here – it's well structured. The weather is the only problem."

"I had a 2½ week spell of not flying. If you could move it to Spain or southern France – or California – it would be perfect..."

■ Lt Humphries was subsequently selected for fast-jet training.

Students look up to Alan

BARKSTON Heath is a fairly self-contained operation, with accreditation to train its own flying instructors, and a spick-and-span engineering section, under Johnny Johnson, which does in-depth airframe servicing and repairs – everything bar engine refurbishment.

"We are insured by Willis, one of the largest insurers of aircraft in the world, and when they came to see us early on they said they would use us as a benchmark for other training establishments," said Hunting's deputy manager John Craven, who has 30 years' experience of flying training.

"We achieve a level of excellence seldom seen in military flying centres. We often recruit ex-Service people who are well up the promotion chain."

One of the civilian instructors the entire staff look up to – literally – is Alan Wade, one of Britain's top display pilots.

With a clutch of awards to his name – including the Douglas Bader Trophy and the Steadman Display Sword from the Fairford International Air Tattoo – and a track record of displays all over the world, Alan is the man to really put the Firefly through its paces.

In order to stay current, he has to fly a display or practise every five days, which prevents flying for a short period – allowing students to marvel at his skills and nerve.

"But display flying is a tiny part of the job – it's the most public and obvious, but it really is secondary," Alan said.

"My reason for being here is as an A2-qualified flying instructor, and I enjoy the training part as much as anything."

Pokemon players set for hot seat

THE immediate target for many students at JEFTS is a place in the fast-jet pipeline and a Sea Harrier of their own. The budding Sea Harrier pilot would have another two years of training to undertake, but those who follow the more normal path to rotary wing at Shawbury could be in charge of an aircraft for real in 15 months.

But in the longer term the prize may be even greater for the novices of today.

"The first commanding officers of the

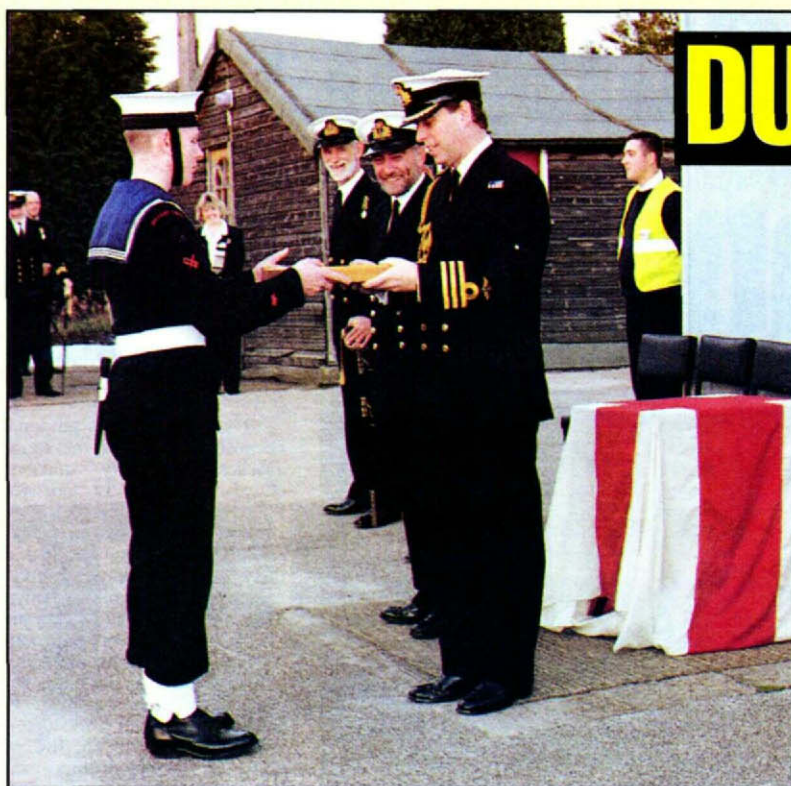
future carrier-borne aircraft are probably in the early part of the flight training pipeline already, and their squadron pilots are swapping Pokemon cards as we speak," said Senior Naval Officer Cdr Andy Edney.

And new opportunities are presented in the rotary world, too, as the Navy continues to take delivery of state-of-the-art Merlin helicopters, offering today's students the chance to get in at the beginning of a new era when they join their squadrons.

Coming later this year: Taking a spin at Shawbury and jetting towards Valley



Sea Cadets



DUKE PAYS A DOUBLE VISIT

FLOODS caused widespread damage in the UK last year – and many Sea Cadet units were obviously particularly vulnerable.

One of the worst hit was Chesterfield Unit, where the Duke of York unveiled a plaque to commemorate their success in beating the deluge.

The Admiral of the SCC then flew by helicopter to Nottingham with Eastern Area Chairperson Sue Dewey – since she also heads up the unit there she would not have been able to get there in time to greet him otherwise!

The Duke took the salute at Colours and the ship's company performed ceremonial divisions and a march past. He presented a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award to PO David Clark and a Lord Lieutenant's badge to PO Michelle Thompson – and was in turn presented with a knot board as a memento of his visit.

● *Left: The Duke receives a knot board from AC Oliver Wright and (right) discusses further knotty problems with Chesterfield Cadets. Below (left) he is seen addressing the ship's company of TS Orion at Nottingham and (right) inspecting the guard of TS Danae*



100 per cent Burns

LC JAMES Burns of Basildon unit receives his shield for Outstanding Achievement from London Area Staff Officer (Technical) Lt G. T. Wilson.

James – known to his friends as Monty – has advanced from Cadet to Leading Cadet in a little over 12 months. He recently attended courses on board TS Iveston, when he achieved 100 per cent in both Class 2 Mechanical Engineering and Electrical Engineering!

City pair in the spotlight

AC WILLIAM McCarthy was seen by millions of people receiving the Lord Mayor of London's Cadet award from Alderman David Howard during the Lord Mayor's Parade.

The ceremony at the Mansion House was shown on national television and witnessed by several thousand people in the surrounding streets.

The first Sea Cadet to receive this award was PO Christine Weston, also from TS City of London, in 1999. The follow-on award recognises the close links between the unit, based in HMS Belfast, and various City institutions including the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights.

Meanwhile PO Timothy Excell has lived up to his name by notching up 100 proficiency points, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd class specialisations including first aid, offshore sailing and power qualifications and the Frimley Park joint services leadership award.

● *The pair are seen on board HMS Belfast – McCarthy being congratulated by Commodore John Clayden with Excell to his left.*





Sea Cadets



Upbeat times for Cleo



Cleo

TWO years ago, to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of TS Cleopatra, Harrogate granted the unit the right to emblazon their drums with its arms.

The drums had seen better days, however – and so a lot of hard work went into raising funds for a new set.

Thanks to the support of a former cadet, the target was achieved, the drums bought – and TS Cleopatra went on with them to win Best Competition Band and Best Arena Display in the National Competition at Rhyl.

To celebrate their success the band was awarded a Civic Reception and the opportunity was taken to dedicate the drums.

• Mayor of Harrogate Cllr Pat Marsh with her Chaplain, the Rev John Colston, unit chairman Mick Clipston and PPO Joseph Sutcliffe with the new bass drum.



Commodore gets in the swing

COMMODORE HMS Neptune Cdre Richard Lord talks to Cadets David Faller and Melissa DeSousa during his inspection of the Greenock unit TS Gold Rover. He later watched an evening of evolutions which included a fire fighting demonstration and a "club swingers waltz" carried out by the Physical Training Group.

FOUNDING GRANDFATHERS

FOUNDER member of Stoke-on-Trent unit in 1937, Mr J.A.Morgan, of Trentham, Stoke, sent us this picture of them all at their summer camp at Heswall on the River Dee the following year. He's the one with the glasses in the middle of the second row from the back. Does anyone recognise grandparents or great grandparents from this group?





"They won't come out – been 'Stood To' so long they've forgotten how to 'Stand Down'."

NEWSVIEW

Helos in harm's way – as ever

THE DANGERS faced by RN helicopter crews these days are starkly illustrated by Lt Cdr Jock Gordon's account of 845 Sqn's eight-year deployment to former Yugoslavia – the longest of any British unit there.

It is bad enough flying in severe weather over physically hostile terrain – but to do so under fire, as 845 frequently was, and under the constant threat of fire, imposes a quite separate strain on both men and materiel.

A big, low flying Sea King offers an irresistible target to enemy ground forces – and to any nutter with a rifle, come to that.

There are even stories of aircraft found to have been plugged after flying over home territory. Helicopters are noisy – so that you might never know you'd been hit until you get home and count the holes in the fuselage.

During humanitarian sorties over Sierra Leone, we hear, a certain Naval chaplain used to sit on his flak jacket. Which suggests that padres are as put off by the idea of a bullet up the backside as anyone else . . .

So as 845 Sqn returns from its long sojourn in the front line, we should remember that RN helicopters are *always* in the front line, one way or another. There's been no let up for 845 anyhow – no sooner were they back from Bosnia than they were off to support 3 Cdo Bde RM, battling with the elements in northern Norway.

Telling tales

A lot of us – me included – could listen to Alan Bennett reading the telephone book. He has become the voice of nostalgia to those of us of a certain age. But most of all, perhaps, he speaks for those his own age – too young to have participated actively in World War II – and for those a generation younger – born too late to have known it at all and yet constantly reminded of it, and inspired by it, through a period that lasted at least to around the early 1960s, when the likes of Bennett, Peter Cook, Jonathan Miller and the rest of the "Fringe" era satirists started poking fun at the stiff-upper-lip tradition.

I had a copy of Bennett's *Telling Tales* for Christmas. Reading through it, I was struck by a vein of what sounds like bitterness. Certainly, you get the impression that Bennett was terribly disappointed by his war: "The drabness of my memories of the war and the sparseness of my memories altogether are a great discouragement to me when I begin to think about writing. What is there to write about? It was a childhood dull, without colour, my memories done up like the groceries of the time in plain, utility packets. . ."

Bennett, it seems to me, is speaking for a generation that felt itself let down, deprived by an accident of birth of the chance of full participation in great events. Just as Scott Fitzgerald was a generation earlier, when he poured his frustrations into *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*.

This too was bitter stuff, full of rage about a "lost generation" that was even more adrift than the one that went before.

It is a curious phenomenon that children today are starting to appreciate what their forebears endured rather better than their parents did. They are doing this through school projects that seek to enlarge understanding by "empathising" with aspects of wartime life rather than by learning the long lists of facts and figures that once made up the curriculum.

I used to think that was a retrograde step in education. Now I'm not so sure.

'The face that launched a thousand ships' – that's model Liz Cass's official role as the symbol of the International Festival of the Sea at Portsmouth Naval Base this year.

She is seen here at the Navy stand at the London Boat Show with OM(AW) Gordon Russell, representing the tri-Service element of the festival as part of the Defence 2001 (Taking Defence to the Nation) initiative.

IFOS 2001, from August 24-27, will be the largest maritime event ever to be held in Britain.

FESTIVAL FACES

INTERNATIONAL
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SEA

PORTSMOUTH
AUGUST 24-27 2001



Atlantic rowing boat is unveiled

THE ROWING boat which could carry two Royal Marines to a transatlantic record has been unveiled at the London Boat Show.

Atlantic Spirit is a streamlined, lightweight carbon fibre boat, ten metres in length, and just half the weight of her four-man crew.

It is self-righting, compartmentalised for buoyancy, and has watertight accommodation for the crew during bad weather.

The team captain is Mark Stubbs, a firefighter in Dorset who served in the Royal Marines during the Falklands War.

He rowed the Atlantic in 1997, when the crossing took 58 days, and has won the Devizes to Westminster canoe race.

The two serving Royals are Capt Mark Phillips, a four-times winner of the Devizes to Westminster race and a keen extreme rock climber, and Mark Woods, a member of the RM downhill ski team and an Ironman triathlete with several mountain marathons under his belt.

The fourth rower is Herefordshire firefighter Steve King.

The team plans to start from St John's in Newfoundland, Canada, in June, and have set a target of 32 days, which would smash the current record of 35 days held by 11 Frenchmen.



● Caroline Alexander, author of the book *The Endurance*, with OM Kate Massey on board HMS Endurance off South Georgia.

Author signs in at sea

AN AUTHOR who wrote a best-selling book entitled *The Endurance* was invited aboard the RN ship when they met up by chance off South Georgia.

Caroline Alexander was on board MV Explorer, which passed HMS Endurance as the Navy ship was conducting surveys near Stromness.

Stromness, an old whaling station, was the final destination for Sir Ernest Shackleton after his epic journey by sea and land back from the Antarctic after his ship, the original *Endurance*, was caught and crushed by ice.

After a choppy boat transfer to the RN ship, Caroline met with members of the ship's company and signed copies of the book.

Sailors rewarded for saving man's life

TWO SAILORS from HMS Blazer have been awarded commendations for their part in saving the life of a Haitian seaman who lost his legs in an accident in Poole Harbour last year.

Hazel Brodie, a biomedical science student at Southampton University, and RO Philip Waldron, ran to help Philome Guerrier after they saw the accident aboard the merchant ship, berthed close by.

The Haitian deckhand's legs had been severed by mooring ropes, and the sailors from Blazer, Southampton University RN Unit's P2000 patrol boat, stopped the bleeding and helped paramedics lift the man into an ambulance.

He was taken to hospital in Poole, and has since returned to Haiti.

Helen and Philip were awarded Commander-in-Chief Fleet commendations by Rear Admiral Ian Forbes, Flag Officer Surface Flotilla, at the URNU training base in Kingsway, Southampton.

The BBC followed up the story of the accident and rescue for their 999 programme, to be screened later this year.

HMS Blazer is used by students from Southampton and Portsmouth universities to learn seamanship, navigation and other maritime skills.

Students from universities across the UK compete for places in 14 URNUs and, if successful, gain the rank of Midshipman in the Royal Naval Reserve.

New approach to radar system

SOFTWARE simulations could cut the development time of a new naval radar system – saving on costs as well.

BAE Systems is developing a new generation of radar which is multi-functional and virtually immune to jamming.

And the new system, known as Sampson, is being modelled entirely in software, which allows a battery of software simulations to test its performance.

Sampson could replace the current need for several specialist radar systems – for long-range searching, medium-range searching and target tracking, for example – which would be lighter, cheaper, and easier to maintain.

BAE Systems has already won a contract worth more than £100 million to supply Sampson to the Royal Navy's new Type 45 destroyers.

Submariners' wives share Kursk sadness



● Admiral Sir Nigel Essenhigh (right) is met by Admiral Sir Michael Boyce as he takes up his new appointment as First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff. Admiral Boyce will move to his new post in the middle of this month, when he becomes Chief of the Defence Staff.

SUPPORT from the wives of British submariners has been welcomed by the families of Russian sailors affected by the loss of the Kursk.

Mrs Vivien Stevens, wife of Flag Officer Submarines, Rear Admiral Rob Stevens, wrote to Mrs Lyachin, whose husband died with more than 100 shipmates when the Russian nuclear submarine was crippled by an explosion and sank in the Barents Sea last summer.

Mrs Stevens, writing on behalf of British submariners' wives, said: "We would like to express our deep regret and sympathy for you all after the Kursk accident."

"You can imagine that you were all very much in our thoughts and prayers during the incident, and continue to be so now."

"We as submariners' wives all realise the dangers that our men face, and of course how devastating accidents like that can be."

With the letter went a cheque for \$10,000, money raised by past and present submariners, as part of an ongoing collection administered by the RN Submarine Museum in Gosport to ease the

hardship of Kursk widows and dependants.

The letter and cheque was handed to Capt (retd) Igor Kurdin, of the St Petersburg Submarine Association, by Mrs Sheena McCready, who accompanied her husband, Capt Geoff McCready, to the Russian submariners' club.

Capt McCready was, until November, the Naval Attaché in Moscow, and the couple were able to add a further cheque for \$6,000 raised by various ships and organisations in the UK.

They met several Kursk widows, a funeral having been held that day for one of the victims.

"As you can imagine, the mood was very sombre," Mrs McCready wrote to Mrs Stevens.

"But we were well received, and I believe that the widows appreciated our sincerity in expressing our condolences, especially when they realised that Geoff was a submariner and I a submariner's wife."

"They were all deeply appreciative of our visit, our words, and the money."

"We were struck by their incredible bravery and dignity."

"It was an extremely moving and haunting experience, which really highlighted for me the great empathy shared by submariners' wives, regardless of language or nationality."

Concert tickets on sale

TICKETS are available for the Spring Concerts of the Band of HM Royal Marines Portsmouth and HM Royal Marines School of Music.

The concerts will take place in St Mary's Church, Fratton, in Portsmouth, on Thursday February 8, Thursday March 8 and Thursday March 29.

The audience should be seated by 7.20pm on each evening.

Season tickets are available at £12, or £10 for concessions, while for individual performances the cost is £5 each, or £4 for concessions.

Refreshments and car parking facilities will be available on each evening.

Tickets should be obtained from Mrs Sutherland, telephone 023 9272 6182.

President visits Iron Duke

THE PRESIDENT of Sierra Leone has paid a visit to HMS Iron Duke off the coast of his country.

President Kabbah, accompanied by top officials, joined the Commander of the UK Joint Task Force in Sierra Leone, Brig Jonathan Riley, to witness a demonstration of firepower from the frigate.

The president thanked the British Government for their continued role in ensuring the stability of the beleaguered West African country.

Those thanks were extended to the ship's company of the Type 23 frigate.

He said: "Without the help of the British Forces and the awesome technology available to you, the situation in Sierra Leone would be much worse."

The visit followed a demonstration by approximately 150 RAF Regiment paratroopers, who parachuted into Lungi Airport – also witnessed by President Kabbah and his entourage.

They were not the only visitors – also on board was a BBC film crew, making a documentary about the country's problems, and the captain of the 4th Frigate Squadron, Capt Duncan Potts.

HMS Iron Duke had returned to Sierra Leone following a short spell in the South Atlantic, where she visited the Falkland Islands and attended a defence sales exhibition in Valparaiso in Chile.

The frigate is due back in her home port, Portsmouth, at the end of this month.



● Cdr Ben Key, Commanding Officer of HMS Iron Duke, greets President Kabbah on the flight deck.

WELCOME ASHORE!

Ever since 1867 Royal Alfred has provided safe havens of care for retired seafarers and their dependants. Our Homes and Housing, at Banstead in Surrey and Eastbourne in Sussex, provide long term and respite care for up to 125 people and are open to anyone who has served at sea in the Royal Navy or the Merchant Navy, or worked in allied trades and professions.

The Society is dedicated to providing high standards of service, and has recently embarked on an extensive modernisation programme which includes the construction at Banstead of a brand new nursing and residential home for 56 residents, plus 22 newly built or refurbished sheltered housing units.

The cost of this development will be close to £3 million and it will strain our resources. Please help us with a gift if you possibly can, or, for the longer term, remember us with a legacy.

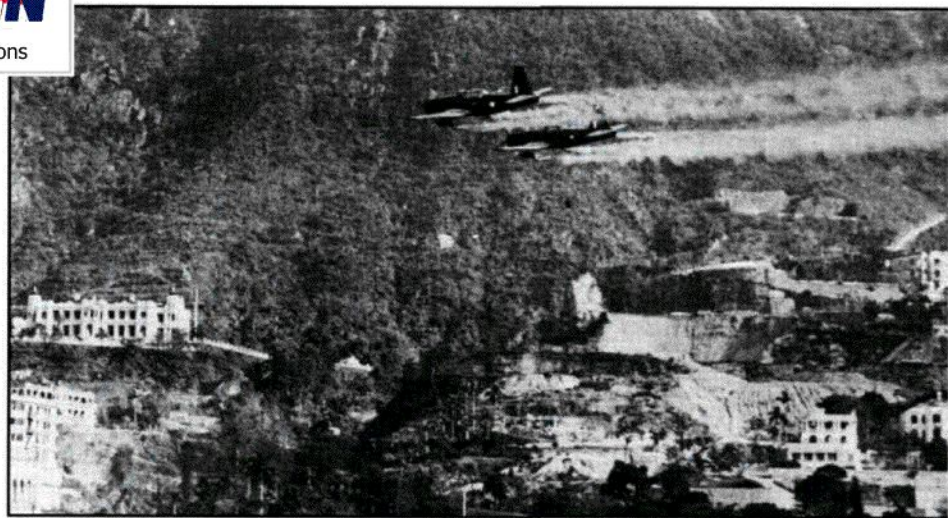
Further information about the Society is available from the General Secretary who will be glad to advise about tax-efficient ways of giving, or to provide details about the accommodation available.



Royal Alfred

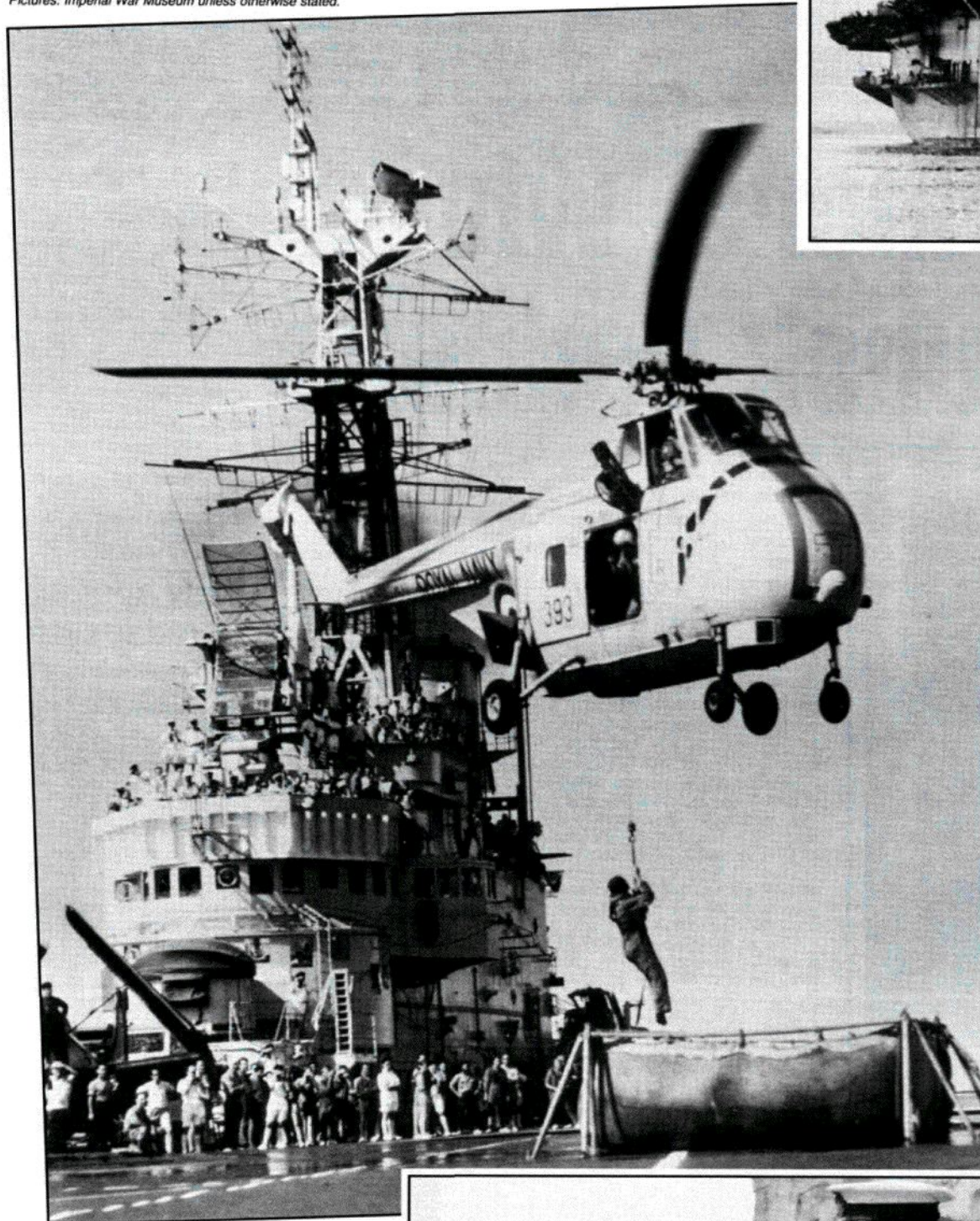
SEAFARERS' SOCIETY

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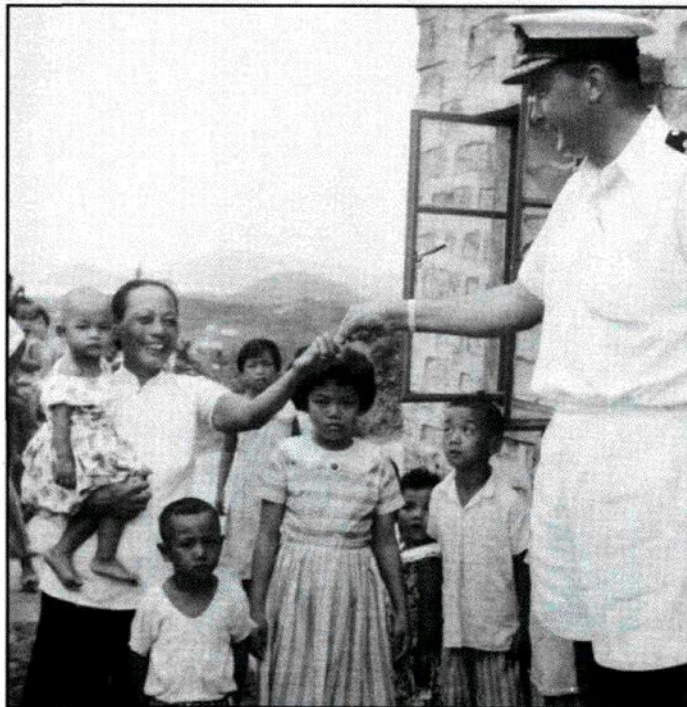
● One of the more unusual Naval Air Squadrons was the one based in Hong Kong shortly after the war. The Royal Navy Anti-Malarial Spraying Unit No. 1 Squadron, from the aircraft carrier HMS Vengeance, but stationed at Kai Tak airfield, sprayed the colony with DDT. The need had arisen because the Japanese had taken no precautions against malaria during the occupation years, and the disease was rife when Hong Kong was re-occupied.

Pictures: Imperial War Museum unless otherwise stated.



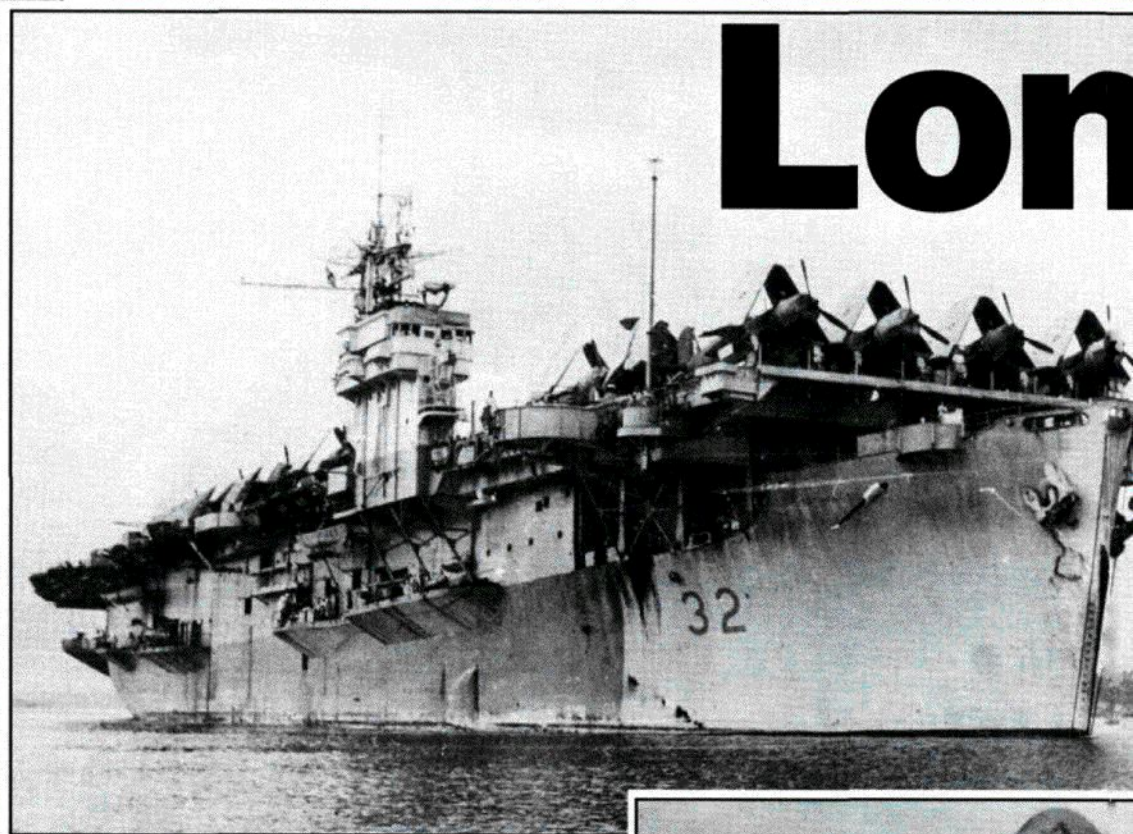
● A Naval Whirlwind helicopter undertakes a rescue operation from a very modest swimming pool on the flight deck of HMS Bulwark, June 1958. The demonstration, for Singaporean schoolchildren, was part of that year's Operation Showboat – designed to demonstrate the contribution made by the Royal Navy to the defence of overseas territories.

● Cdr S. Baynham, Commanding Officer of HMS Torquay, hands over the keys of a furnished cottage to a Chinese family in Hong Kong in August 1960. The double cottage, on a smallholding with a stocked pig-sty, was bought with £320 collected by the ship's company to help ease the refugee problem. The 189 men gave a percentage of their pay while the ship was in the Far East, collected loose change from 19 countries visited, and held a funfair at sea, and put it towards the scheme promoted by the World Lutheran Federation for building an estate of homes and allotments at Sai Wung in the New Territories.

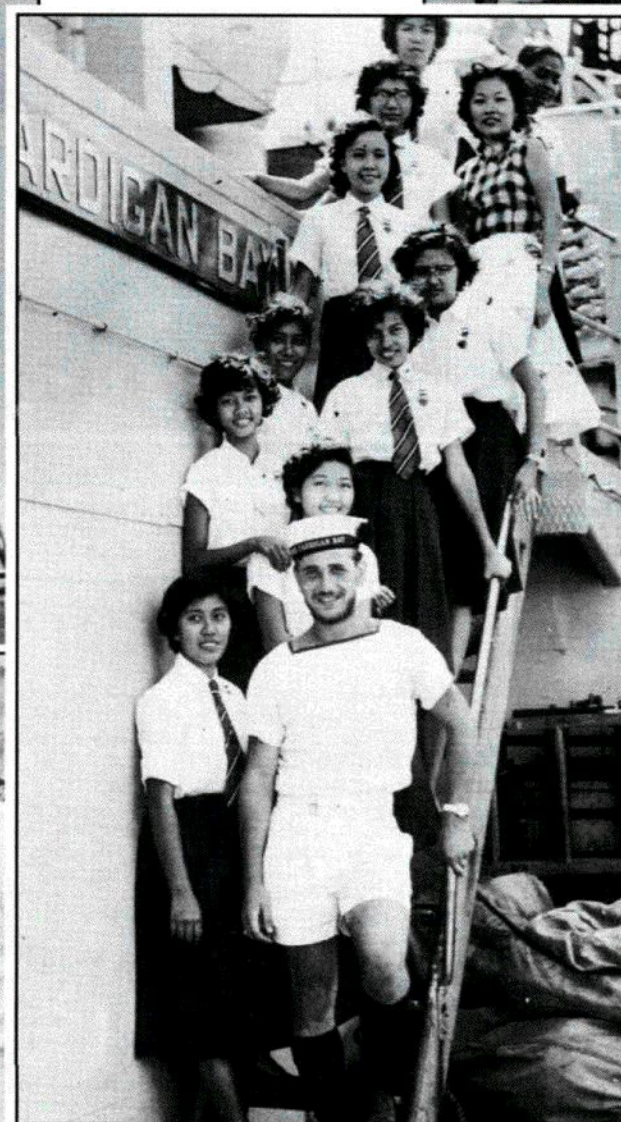


Navy News recalls the variety of

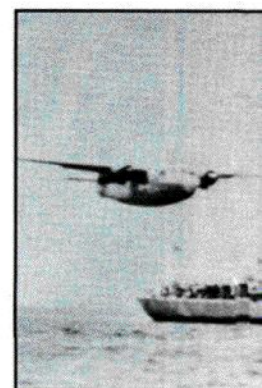
Lon



● Royal Navy escort carrier HMS Chaser arrives in Cochin, on the west coast of India, in April or May 1945, packed with aircraft for a reception unit ashore. Once converted to a ferry carrier, Chaser could transport up to 90 aircraft. Some are in packing cases, others are practically fully assembled, lashed to the flight deck – and erenolised, like this Corsair at Cochin (right). Erenol was a rubber-like solution which was liberally sprayed over the fuselage and wings, and when it dried it formed a weatherproof skin. Once the aircraft arrived at its destination, the skin could be stripped off and the aircraft fully assembled.

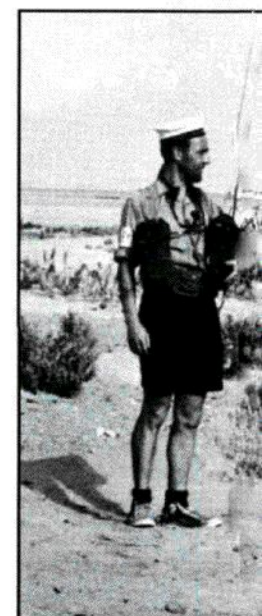


● Exercise Showboat again – this time, HMS Cardigan Bay took 50 students and schoolchildren from Singapore to sea for eight hours in March 1957, during which time the ship fired its weapons and the RAF made dummy air attacks. Many such exercises were arranged through local education authorities whenever a RN ship was available to give an idea of the Navy's contribution to the defence of their country.



● Mail drops in the past demonstrated by this ex-whaler of HMS Loch Alvie dropped into the sea by the ship's boat quick.

● Wrens stationed at Sir Kuala Lumpur. Arrangements in the aircraft flying up the offer in May 1946.



Life under the White Ensign 'East of Suez'

Long ago and far away

MENTION of Naval geographic terms such as East of Suez or the China Station is still capable of eliciting a misty-eyed response from sailors, past and present, and *Navy News* has dipped into the not-too-distant past to recall some of the distinctive images of

the times and places which were once so familiar.

Operations in the Far East after the war took up a good deal of Admiralty resources, and saw men and ships cover vast distances – a RN fleet operating south of Japan would find itself 3,000 miles from 'home', almost certainly Singapore.

And the flow of men and materiel between the UK and Far East was constant.

For example, the very first edition of *Navy News*, in June 1954, reported on the progress of 'ferry carrier' HMS *Perseus*, which was on her way to Singapore with a very mixed cargo – Green Line buses for Kure, "tons of 'comforts' for the troops in Malaya", aircraft, a fire engine, Royal Navy transport, caravans and a concrete mixer being among the items stowed away on board, along with around 200 people bound for ships and shore units.

Typical of the kind of overseas commission at the time was that reported for HMS *Ceylon*, with the ship's company sailing to Singapore in June 1952 in what became HMAS *Vengeance* and relieving the old ship's company back from Korea.

After refit, the ship returned to her base at Trincomalee on

the East Indies Station in October 1952, and her first cruise was to Calcutta to 'show the flag', returning to 'Trinco' for Christmas.

Ceylon left for Colombo and the Maldives on Boxing Day, and fitted in a ten-week Gulf cruise before returning to Trinco via Karachi, Bombay and Cochin.

Easter was spent at Madras, and after maintenance in Singapore, the ship visited the Seychelles and East Africa in July 1953, returning to Ceylon in September.

February 1954 brought a change of scenery, with the ship touring Australia to tie in with the Queen's visit.

Further cruises in the Indian Ocean, a second visit to South Africa, and exercises with the Indian and Pakistani navies filled the rest of the ship's time before she returned to Portsmouth in October 1954 – a commission of two years four months.

The unification of Far East assets under a Commander-in-Chief Far East in November 1962 brought under one umbrella a formidable force.

Admiral Sir David Luce had at his disposal strike carrier HMS *Ark Royal*, cruiser HMS *Tiger*, commando carrier HMS *Bulwark*, three frigate squadrons, two minesweeping squadrons, a destroyer squadron, a submarine squadron and Royal Marines commandos, to say nothing of single ships and support units.

Singapore was the largest naval base outside the UK, with 9,000 workers, and Hong Kong provided a forward operating base for a fleet which covered the eastern half of the Indian Ocean and the western half of the Pacific, north of the Equator.

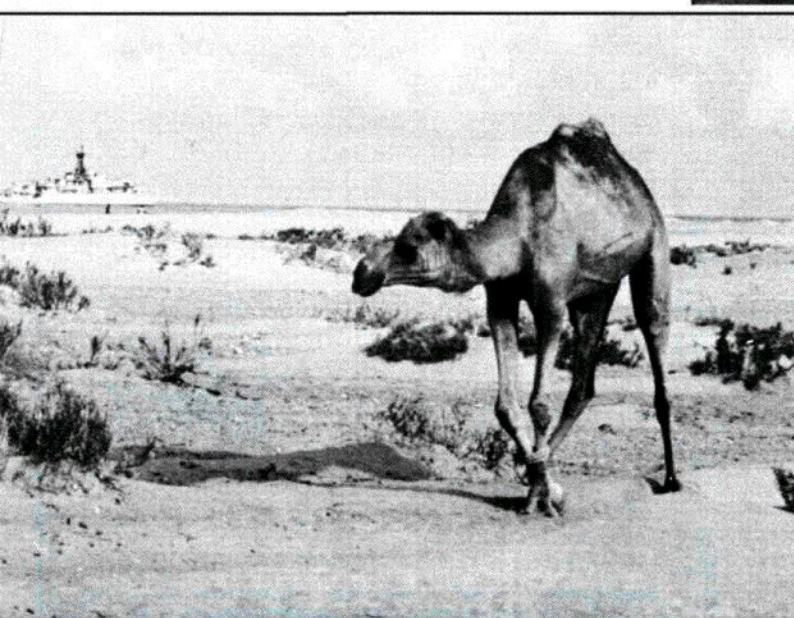


● A heifer is hoisted from a whaler on to the deck of HMS *Loch Fada* in February 1958. Five years earlier the frigate HMS *Wild Goose* had presented a miniature Socotra bull to the Bahrain government for an experimental farm, but the animal did not socialise with the local cows and became lonely. Two months later, the survey ship *Dalrymple*, at the request of the Bahrainis, called at Socotra in the Indian Ocean and obtained a cow, but that died in calving in 1955, leaving the bull 'morose and disgruntled'. So *Loch Fada* took a further two heifers from their island home to the Gulf, and they were exemplary shipmates: "The heifers proved to be good sailors, ruminating as the waters slipped by," the ship reported.



st were a little more rudimentary than the modern equivalent, as ample for the Persian Gulf squadron in August 1957, taken from the ie. When a ship was at sea, or at a remote anchorage, the mail was an aircraft, usually a Pembroke based at RAF Muharraq in Bahrain, kly recovered it, often within a minute of it hitting the water.

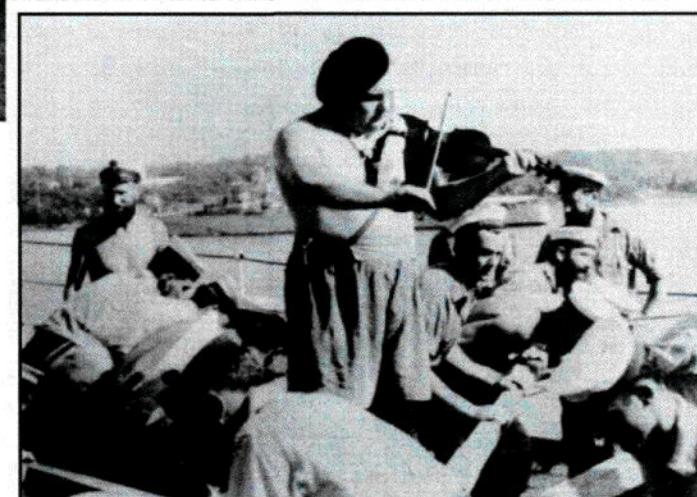
agapore shortly after the war often spent their leave 'up country' at nents were made with the Naval Air Arm for Wrens to occupy spare g the route – and pictured right are some of the women who took boarding the plane for the flight north.



● A rating from HMS *Loch Lomond* makes the acquaintance of a ship of the desert on the shores of the Red Sea in January 1961, while his ship can be seen in the background. During her year in the Gulf, the frigate tested a new air-conditioning system, which was said to have improved conditions on board. Navy warships also landed medical parties ashore to set up temporary 'surgeries' for isolated communities.

Picture: Navy News archive.

● In an echo of Nelson's time, the ship's company of HMS *Kenya* weigh anchor using a capstan, while a fiddler inspires them to greater efforts (right). This method, seldom used in warships of the time, was employed during Commonwealth exercises, also involving ships from Ceylon, India and Pakistan, in April 1952.





The Gangplank Club



Have fun by watching the weather!

AHOY THERE me hearties! I be thinking that this 'ere February is a bit of a dull old month. I be waiting for me ship to be ready to sail again. Me crew and I be looking at the charts for the best places in the world to sail. Have ye got any suggestions? I be right interested!

Bert the Deck Hand is just setting up a new-fangled weather station on me ship. It be vital that we know what the weather be doing. I have lots of diaries on board me ship telling me what the weather was doing every jolly day years and years ago. It's rare good fun to read 'em! I understand ye land lubbers have been having some horrible old weather. So, why don't ye set up a weather station. Technocat be telling you how in these 'ere pages...

HI EVERYONE Captain Plank has asked me to show you how to make a Weather Station. It's very easy!

All you need is a small measuring jug, a piece of garden cane and a piece of light weight ribbon.

If you have an old kite, the tail ribbon is ideal! If you have some spare pocket money you could also buy an outdoor thermometer.

The measuring jug should be able to measure very small amounts of liquid. Put it outside in a place where it will receive any rain that falls but won't get blown over. Make sure it's far enough away from any trees or gutters otherwise extra water will get in and ruin your records of rainfall. It's also useful to cover it with a piece of netting so leaves don't blow into it.

DATE: February 1st 2001 **TIME:** 0715
WIND: Light breeze. Ribbon hardly moving.
RAINFALL: 2mm
TEMPERATURE: 3 C
WEATHER: Grey skies. Chilly!

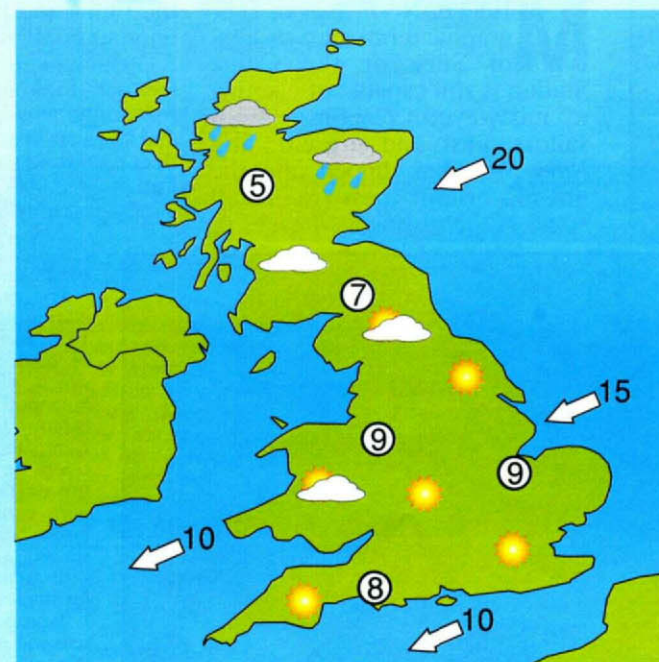
Next take the garden cane. It should be about 1m long and quite sturdy. Tie the ribbon at the top.

The cane should then be placed in the windiest part of your garden. Ideally you could tie it to a post so that it is nice and high up.

If not, just put it into the ground. Now you're ready to watch the weather!

Get a diary or an exercise book. Every day make your weather notes! You can record it however you want but it could look something like the box shown above.

Keep your diaries safe and next year you can compare what the weather was like on that day last year. You never know you, could end up as a TV Weather Forecaster!!



PIRATE BUG



WE HAVE 100 of these Glo Bugs to give away to lucky members. Send your name, member number and address on a postcard to 'Glo Bugs', The Gangplank Club, HMS Nelson, Queen Street, Portsmouth, PO1 3HH. You could be lucky!

Date for your diary

MARCH 16 is Red Nose Day and this year Ant and Dec (below) will be joining in the campaign that says "Pants to Poverty".

It's time to get cracking with your fund raising campaigns! Raising money only takes a minute but the difference it makes can last a lifetime. Every pound donated to Comic Relief will help poor and disadvantaged people in the UK and in Africa.

This year you must get your hands on one of the very special new noses! We can't say much cos it's a big secret! But make sure you get one! If you want to keep up with what's happening on Red Nose Day log on to www.comicrelief.com

Picture: Johnny Boylan



WIN FAMILY TICKETS TO

UK PREMIERE TOUR

Grigorovich's NUTCRACKER

AT THE LONDON APOLLO THEATRE



This classic Christmas story about a girl swept away to a magical dreamworld is full of Tchaikovsky's memorable music - Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, Waltz of the Flowers, Russian Dance and Decoration of the Christmas Tree March.

Now for the first time Grigorovich's Nutcracker is brought to the UK in its entirety, after delighting Moscow audiences for decades.

For a chance to win a family ticket to this lovely Ballet. Answer the following question correctly.

QUESTION: Name one of the Dances which are performed in the 'Nutcracker' Ballet.

SEND YOUR ANSWERS ON A POSTCARD TO THE 'GANGPLANK CLUB', NAVY NEWS, HMS NELSON, QUEEN STREET, PORTSMOUTH, PO1 3HH.

Closing date for entries 4th February 2001.

THE EDITORS DECISION IS FINAL. RELATIVES AND EMPLOYEE'S OF NAVY NEWS ARE INELIGIBLE

THE MESS DECK

Thanks for all your letters. It's great to hear all your news! James McArdle sent us some brilliant jokes.

We liked this one best -

What do you call a sheep with no head and legs?

A cloud!!

Glad you all had a nice Christmas Hannah Dennis. The crew had lots of presents too! Paul Kitching sent us some amazing drawings and info on submarines, well done. Hope you enjoy your new model-making hobby. Why not send us some pictures of the models!

Lauren Perrin says she's got 37 animals - wow Lauren, what are they?

Thanks for your letters David Murphy and Simon Hetherington.

Simon look out for details of the International Festival of the Sea. It's happening in Portsmouth this year and it's going to be FAB. Don't forget everyone the crew love getting your letters!

www.navynews.co.uk/gangplank

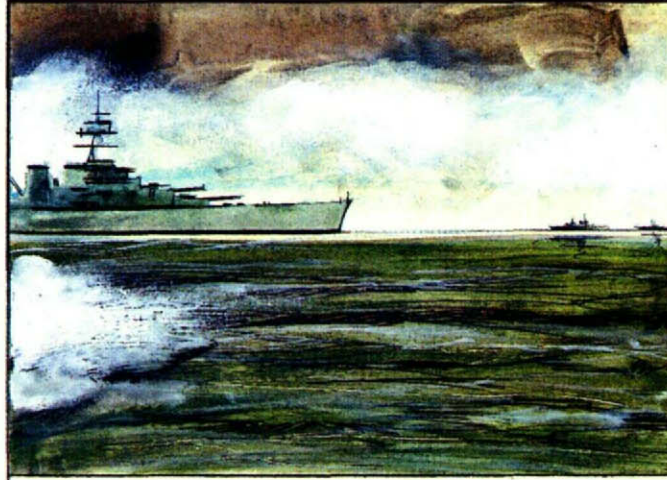


May 3, 1941: HMS Norfolk and Suffolk are on the tail of the Bismarck, off the icy coast of Greenland...

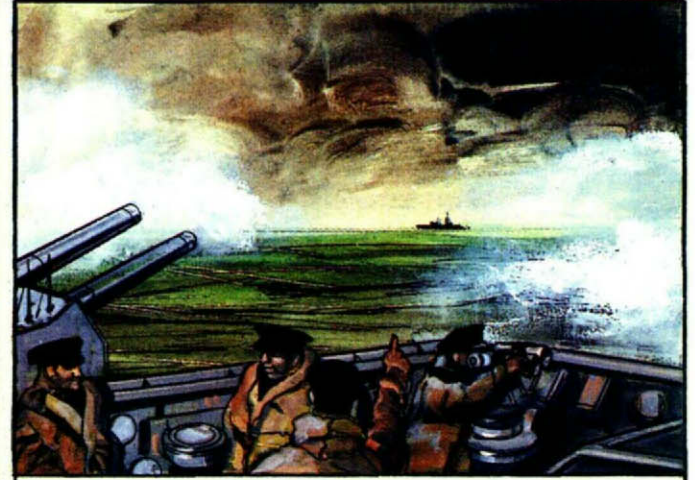
THE BISMARCK



Covered by the fog banks, the cruisers Norfolk and Suffolk shadow Bismarck and Prinz Eugen 12 miles astern - the limit of their radar, which the Germans wrongly assume to be inferior to their own.



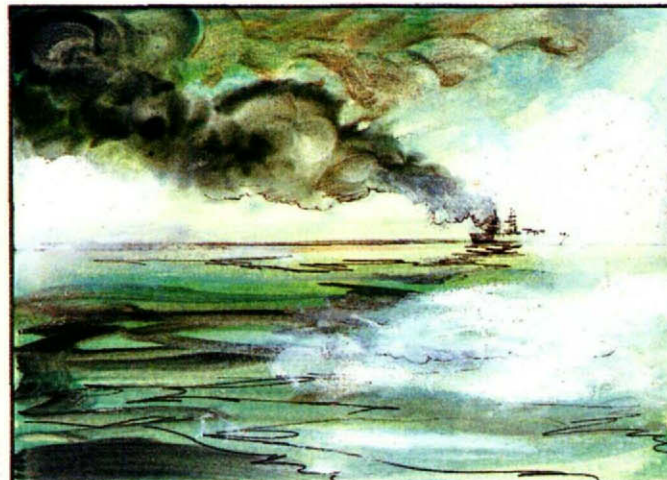
Admiral Holland in HMS Hood receives word from HMS Suffolk and moves to intercept.



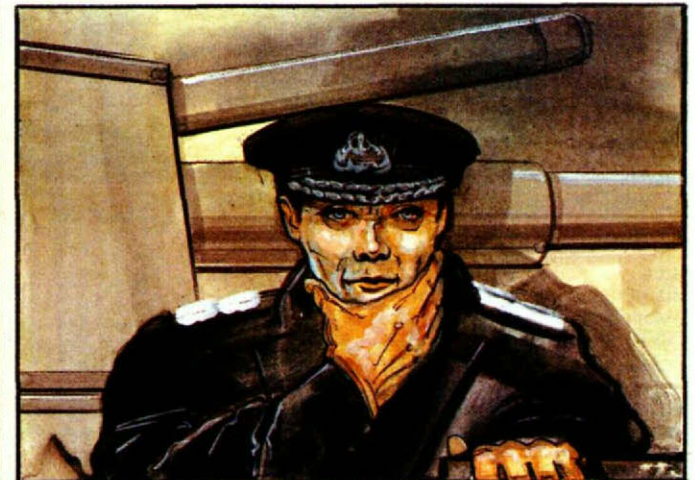
2030. Suddenly HMS Norfolk comes out of the fog to find Bismarck to port and only six miles away.



Bismarck opens fire at once - three of her salvos narrowly missing the British cruiser.



Norfolk swings back into the fog, making smoke to escape the Bismarck's lethal 15 inch guns



Admiral Tovey is 600 miles to the South East. "I hope Hood may head them off and force them to turn back..."

Birthday Congratulations!

Michael Albray, Sophie Alderson, Carl Alexander, Ryan Alexander, Connor Allan, Daniel Allford, Stuart Appleby, William Arkesden, Jenny Armitage, Scott Bailey, Christian Barber-Batten, Daniel Beech, Neil Beith, David Bell, Andrew Bewsey, Danielle Blandford, Linzi Box, Ryan Bradley, Matthew Bragg, Royston Brien, Jessica Brooks, Adam Brown, Jonathan Brown, Matthew Brown, James Brown, Shaine Cassidy, Keane Challoner, Lois Cheadle, Thomas Coole, James Cox, Charlotte Crook, Lorna Davies, Benjamin Davis, John Davison, Callum Dawes, Stuart Dilloway, Alex Dutton, Elliot Dyer, Amy Enright, Sophie Enright, Rachel Farmer, David Flack, Charles Flint, Margaret Forbes, James Ford, Jennifer Fox, Patrick Fry, Edward Goates, Thomas Goss, Daniel Graffham, Laura Haines, Alex Hamp, Thomas Harding, Victoria Heaps, Marcus Heather, Bryony Herwood, Nicholas Herington, Samuel Howard, James Hunt, Richard Jamieson, Stacey Johnson, Harry Johnstone, William Jones, Philippa Keeble, Francesca Kenyon, Thomas Kittredge-Barrall, Robert Laing,

Alexander Lang, Claire Large, Claire Legg, James Leggat, Emilia Lockyer, Jeremy Mackey, Carl Martin, Emily Martin, Katie McBride, Laura Miller, Matthew Miller, Jack Morris, Robert Myers, Rachel Ould, Andrew Waterfield, Danielle Peckham, Nathan Peglar, Sophie Phillips, Christine Pickard, Kirsty Porter, Stephanie Preece, Alex Price, Vanem Pullen, Sophie Regan, Connor Reid, Beth Richards, Michael Ritchie, Andrew Roberts, Robert Robertson, Jonathan Rogers, Moillie-Grace Rowe, Laura Scarborough, Jonathan Scully, Lucinda Seaward, Tanbir Shahid, Stephanie Shaw, Marcus Simms, William Simpson, Ashley Smith, Kirsty Smith, Caroline Stanley, Scott Stephens, Sarah Tadman, Emma Tait, Guy Temple, Catherine Thackham, Luke Thackam, Mitchell Thompson, Matthew Tinker, Kieran Tobin, Kathryn Walker, Ryan Weir, Thomas West, Daniel White, Ashleigh Whiteway, Stephen Whitfield, Callum Whitham, Gareth Williams, Jade Wilson, Curtis Wilson, Lewis Wilson, Laura Wood, Chloe Woodward, Sam Woolley, Lee Woolstan-Holmes.

A letter from Cousin Sam

DO YOU remember Jack met his cousin Sam at Christmas and Sam was thinking of joining the Navy? Well, Sam promised to stay in touch with Jack. Here's his latest letter to Jack.

Dear Jack,

I'm very excited. Do you remember I spoke to the people at the Armed Forces Career Office? Well, I've now found out what happens next.

I have to decide which service I want to join. I can join the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines or the Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service.

I also need to decide what job I want to do.



That's called a branch of choice. There's loads of different things I can do. I think I would like to be a diver in the Navy. I have to be 15 years and nine months old before I can apply to join, but that's not long and I can't wait.

The officer said he would tell me what happens when I apply so I'll write and tell you more soon. Hope school's ok, it's not so bad being back is it?

See you soon,
Sam

WINNERS of the November Barney video competition are Thomas Davis, Sarah Lockie, Jacob Bushell, William Adams, Adam Spivey, Naomi Archer, Jodie Savory, Joe Jowle, Charlotte Mason and Syeda Moazzam.
WELL DONE ALL OF YOU!



Please enroll me as a member of The Gang Plank Club. I enclose a PO/cheque (payable to Navy News) for: £4.25 1 year UK - £7.50 2 year UK (saving £1)

Name

Address

.....

.....

Postcode

D.O.B. Tel No

E-mail address

School attended

Joined by: Parent ☐ Grandparent ☐ Other ☐

Do you have any Brothers ☐ Sisters ☐ Ages ☐

Special Interests: Sport ☐ Music ☐ Film/TV ☐

Friends ☐ Reading ☐

Send your completed form, together with a postal order/cheque for £4.25 or £7.50 to:

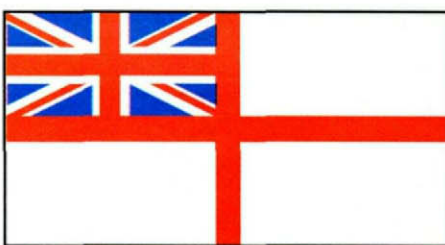
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Model gift for Patrol group's president

PRESIDENT of the RN Patrol Service Association, Cdr Gary Titmus RN, was presented with a detailed model of a wartime motor minesweeper at the Association's 25th anniversary commemorations.

The event, at which 22 standards were on display, was held at the RNPSA's headquarters at Sparrow's Nest, Lowestoft.

The model, about 2ft long, was of the 165-ton MMS 31 made by Allen Smith (75). His attention to detail included a figure of Cdr Titmus on the bridge.

"He has been president of the Association for 15 years," said Allen. "I wanted to do something for him on behalf of all loyal shipmates of the RNPSA and 'the Nest' to show our appreciation."

As well as the model, Cdr Titmus was presented with a portrait of himself, copied from a photograph, by Jack Moore, ex-RNVR.

Allen, who has a fleet of Naval minesweeper models at his home in Oldham, said he plans to donate them all to the northern Imperial War Museum being established at Salford Quays.

The museum at Sparrow's Nest already has many of his models on display.

Devotion born out of family's war tragedy



● A happy family picture of the Haxells taken in 1940... but in weeks the mother, baby and eldest daughter were dead, leaving only Doreen (right). Two years later her sailor father Alfred was killed when his ship HMS Somali was sunk.

WHAT often goes unsung is the support given to the Royal Naval Association and its work by dedicated women who often know from personal experience the pain that can accompany Service life in peace and war, writes Shipmate Joan Kelly.

One such is the assistant welfare officer of No 4 Area, Shipmate Doreen Bonner (67) of Bristol branch.

She has a great store of experience to draw upon in her welfare role - including the loss of her mother, father and sisters within two years of warfare.

Born Doreen Haxell, her father Alfred was a leading seaman in the Royal Navy and at the age of seven she lived with her mother Doris and sister Kathleen (11) at Portishead. In 1940, during one of Alfred's long absences at sea, Doris gave birth to a third daughter, Maureen.

Doris was ill after the pregnancy and never fully recovered. Meanwhile, Maureen, aged three months, and Kathleen contracted meningitis and died within a week of each other.

Ten days after Kathleen's death, Doris, too, succumbed. It was not possible to get Alfred back in time to be with his family, including the baby he had never seen.

He himself had only just over two years to live, being killed when his ship, the destroyer HMS Somali, was torpedoed on Arctic convoy duty in September 1942. Doreen was orphaned.

Undaunted, she joined the WRNS in 1951 and in the next year married PO Bernard Bonner by whom she had two sons, Michael and Tony. Bernard was invalided out of the Navy as a war pensioner in 1962 and died just



over 11 years ago.

Michael served in the RAF for 12 years, leaving as a sergeant. But like his grandfather, Alfred, and his father, Doreen's son Tony joined the Navy, leaving as a PO. He joined Bristol branch of the RNA which he serves as standard bearer.

Doreen's tragic experiences, and her strength in rising above them, are well understood by Association members, and they influence the work of the RNA in raising huge sums each year for Naval charities and for those down on their luck.

It is work in which the ladies play a vital role, and it is largely due to their encouragement that their sons and daughters join the RN and RM and the Association.

As more women enroll for Service life it is to be hoped that they will follow the example of the generation of mothers and sisters and daughters who support the Association today. Without them, the RNA might as well lower the flag.

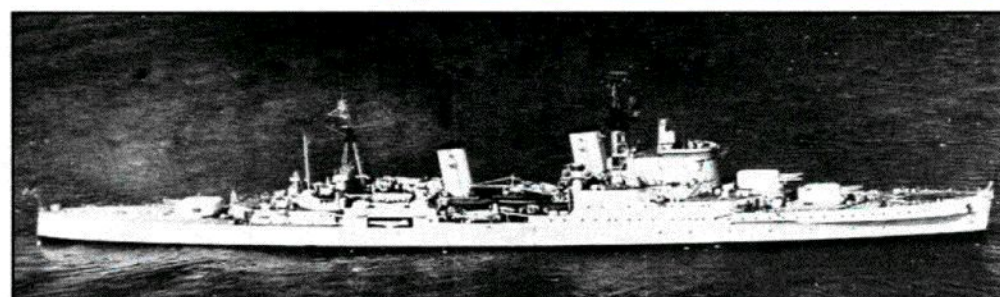
● Doreen Bonner as a Wren in the 1950s and (below) her late husband Bernard who served from 1947 to 1962 before being invalided out.



Women chaplains? - Ours is French!

THE CLAIM by Leighton Linslade branch that they believed they had recruited the RNA's first woman chaplain (*Navy News* November) was challenged in the following edition by Kingston upon Thames who obtained the services of the Rev Alexandra Mills over five years ago.

But now Liss and District have entered the fray. Their claim to have the first French-born woman chaplain among UK branches is probably correct. She is Huguette Jenkins, now a British citizen, who joined in September 1998 as padre and associate member. She works in the parishes of Greatham and Empshott and plays a very active role in branch affairs.



WINNER of our December competition is J. Wicking of Eastbourne, East Sussex. He correctly identified the repair ship HMS Girdle Ness (photographed in 1956) and gave her original name - Penlee Point, which changed in 1944.

Mr Wicking, whose answer was drawn at random, wins £30. Another £30 is offered for the name of this fine ship - and her original, bullish name.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, *Navy News*, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is March 15. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our April edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

PICTURE PUZZLE

MYSTERY PICTURE 72

Name

Address

My answer

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PLEASE ALLOW 28 DAYS FOR DELIVERY

Association



Taffy 'the miracle man' takes to the sky

SHIPMATE Taffy Hughes, whose conquest of arthritis has already earned him the title of 'miracle man' from his local newspaper, has reached a high point of his life at the age of 93.

Taffy, of Littlehampton branch, has severe sight problems, but that hasn't stopped him from flying a glider above the Sussex Downs – and planning to wing-walk and go hot-air ballooning.

What pleased him most about the flight – from Parham Airfield – was being able to drift and float in the air while talking to instructor Dick Dickson without having to shout.

He said: "It was heavenly – so peaceful. I would do it again tomorrow."

Taffy's reputation for being a man who just will not allow physical disability to impair his zest for life started two years ago when *Littlehampton Gazette* dubbed him "miracle man" after he shrugged-off the effects of arthritis.

The disease had virtually crippled him and he could only walk with a stick. Then a few days after wearing a magnetic Bioflow bracelet, he reckoned his health began to improve. Now he can touch his toes and walk unaided.

For some time he has been hooked on flying – and in 1999 he flew in a Tiger Moth biplane from Shoreham Airport nearly 70 years after he flew his friend's Moth.

Thumbs-up from Shipmate Taffy Hughes of Littlehampton branch as he prepares for take-off with glider-pilot instructor Dick Dickson.

Picture: Littlehampton Gazette



Around the Branches

Cheshunt

Two members of Cheshunt's adopted ship during wartime – the Flower-class corvette HMS Dahlia – were guests of honour with the Mayor (Cllr Lyn White) at the branch's annual dinner dance.

They were Shipmates Neville Doyle and Alf Childs who were among the 129 members and friends who attended.

Toasts were proposed by Shipmates Harold Chalkley (president), Vic Everest (chairman), Reg Green (vice chairman) and Spud Murphy (secretary). Replies were given by the Mayor and Shipmate Doyle. The standard was paraded by Shipmate Jack Pugsley.

Life membership was presented to Shipmate Sid Walker, and the Ron Joy Trophy for Shipmate of the Year and the Chalkley Trophy to Shipmate Dave Wilsher.

Gravesend

Shipmate George East (90), the branch's oldest and longest-serving member, was guest of honour at Gravesend's annual dinner attended by 114 members and guests.

The branch secretary, Shipmate Tom Barden – who last year was made a MBE – had raised £250 for the Malta Merchant Seaman Fund, a further £2,000 being raised by the branch for local and Naval charities.

Newton Aycliffe

Shipmate Jean Freeburn (chairman) still manages to run a tight ship while dealing with welfare matters of No 11 Area, being ably assisted in the branch by Shipmates Gwen Bailey (secretary) and John Lendrum (treasurer), with Shipmate Archie Freeburn (president) keeping a kindly eye on the ship's company.

Despite such vigilance – or because of it – members enjoy a good social life and, when funds allow, need no excuse to splice the mainbrace. While they enjoy entertaining visitors, they make regular forays to neighbouring branches, especially Spennymoor.

Wetherby

A candlelit supper of moussaka and Greek salads was served when members of Leeds Hellenic Cultural Society gave the branch a display of Greek dancing.

The setting of 'Taverna Botsaris' was so authentic that members of the branch soon mastered the basic steps of Greek dancing, helped by copious amounts of ouzo.

The occasion, also attended by members of Huddersfield, Nidderdale and Ripon branches, was so successful that it promises to become an annual event. The Greek food and 'nibbles' were provided by ex-RN cooks, Shipmates Vince Parks and Boley Knight – fitting rivals for *Two Fat Ladies*.

Worthing

Disabled RN and RM veterans at Gifford House were each presented with £30 during a Christmas visit by members of No 3 Area and Worthing branch committees.

The branch now has a website on:

www.rnaworthing.homestead.com
Information can also be gained by calling the secretary on 01903 690260.

Kingston upon Thames

Awards were presented at the branch's annual mess dinner and dance to Shipmates Rose Sherwood, Geoff Powell and Les (Spitfire) Smith. Rose received an engraved silver salver for her fund-raising over many years, and Geoff and Les received Shipmate of the Year awards. Shipmate Bill Baptie (social secretary) was praised for his organising skills which made the event the branch's "best yet".

Cwmbran

The branch's 33rd annual remembrance service was held at the Missions to Seafarers in Newport and conducted by the Rev Malcolm Ainscough. It was attended by representatives of Lydney and Newport branches and Newport Merchant Navy Association.

Lessons were read by the chairman of No 7 Area, Shipmate Mervyn G. Hodge, and Cwmbran shipmate Tony Eyres. Seven standards were paraded.

Hanworth

The branch's annual carol concert was attended by 300 members and guests gathered in the clubhouse. The service was conducted by the branch chaplain, the Rev Paul Williamson, and music was provided by the Band of the Surrey Yeomanry under the direction of Sgt-Maj Woods of the Irish Guards.

The branch president, Capt P. Hames, was accompanied by Col

Moore of the RMA.

A collection raised over £200 for St George's Dragon Centre, a community project being developed by the chaplain.

Wigston & District

To celebrate its 30 years in commission the branch held a social evening attended by all four of the surviving founder members – Shipmates Brian Truman, Dave Baker, Wilf White and Arthur Measer.

As an act of homage they read out the names of all branch members who had crossed the bar since 1970.

Driffield

Those attending the branch's Christmas party included shipmates from Spennymoor, Ferryhill, Wakefield, Scarborough, Newton Aycliffe and York.

Entertainment included a Sods' Opera and two professional singers who gave their time free for charity.

Ferndown

Over 100 shipmates were at the branch's Christmas mess night.

A new jewel for the chairman was presented to the branch by Shipmates Mick and Jean Arnold to commemorate the Millennium, and Mick received the surprise honour of life membership from the branch president, Shipmate George Curtis.

In Brief

AT A MEMORIAL service, hand-embroidered hassocks for the Soldier's Chapel of St George's Cathedral, Perth, were presented by Shipmates John Godd (vice chairman) and Geoff Plaice (secretary) of Perth branch. A hassock was presented by Yvonne Maury on behalf of the WRNS.

PASTIES from Cornwall were relished by 80 members and friends of Littlehampton branch during an Oggie Night attended by shipmates from Brighton and Selsey. The feasting and song were also appreciated by the Chairman of Arun District Council and the Deputy Mayor.

WHEN members of Woking branch visited Pembroke House, Shipmate Rod Fraser presented a cheque of £1,500 to have a room in the home named after the branch and identified by a Woking plaque.

DEDICATION of Newark standard was attended by 200 shipmates and guests displaying 24 standards from branches throughout No 9 Area. The band of Sheffield Sea Cadet unit led the parade.

A DAY-LONG street collection by Southend-on-Sea branch raised £2,112. Meanwhile there was a very large turn-out of USN, US Marine Corps members and shipmates of Southend and No 5 Area for the annual Pearl Harbor service of remembrance. Twenty-six standards were paraded.

Mini-museum emerges at Waterlooville club

A GROWING museum of Royal Naval memorabilia has been built up at Waterlooville RNA Club by members of the branch.

The display includes no fewer than 673 ships' badges and 183 pictures and photographs. Besides which there are two ship's scuttles, a ship's wheel, a ship's bell and personal items such as caps, badges, waistbelts, a bosun's call, a wheelspanner – and a pair of pusser's boots.

The items have either been donated by members and friends or have been picked up at car-boot sales.

Also available to members and guests at the club are three libraries – one general, one Naval

and one technical.

'Curator' Dan Daly advises anyone who has memorabilia that they no longer want, to offer it to the RN or RM Museums in the first place, but otherwise to offer it to their local RNA or RMA branch.

He added: "Failing that, rather than throw them out with the rubbish, contact me at RNA Waterlooville Branch, 3 Jubilee Business Centre, 48 Aston Road, Waterlooville, Hants."

Meanwhile, the branch, believing that not enough is being done to preserve war memorials, has with help from the local RAF Association branch, donated by far the largest amount to refurbish their local memorial – forming the Lythgate at St George's Church.

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845 Squadron returns from eight years of deadly terrain, killer weather, being shot at – and saving lives



● An 845 Sea King lands in the snow during the early, most difficult days when the squadron was supporting the UN Protection Force.

ONE OF the longest deployments of any Fleet Air Arm unit ended on January 1 when Sea King helicopters of 845 Naval Air Squadron withdrew from former Yugoslavia. The two remaining aircraft of the original four-strong detachment returned to RN air station Yeovilton to end a continuous, eight-year casualty evacuation and humanitarian task in the dangerous skies of Bosnia and Croatia. Here 845's CO, Lt Cdr Jock Gordon, tells the story of the squadron's years of living dangerously.



● Lt Cdr Gordon, welcomed home by his daughters Millie (two) and Ilona (six). Picture: Western Gazette

THE LONGEST DAYS OF COURAGE

THE WAR that was to bring about the breakdown of the former Republic of Yugoslavia started in April 1992 and escalated rapidly.

On October 23 the British Government decided that 845 Naval Air Squadron should prepare to deploy four aircraft and over 100 personnel to the country to support the British Army in its UN peace-keeping role – codenamed Operation Grapple.

The following three weeks saw a dramatic change in the appearance of our Sea King helicopters. Missile-launch and radar detectors, as well as chaff and flare release systems and armour-plated seats were fitted.

Enhanced external lighting,

compatible with night-vision goggles worn by the aircrew, were fitted to upgrade the aircraft's night-flying capability. However, the most noticeable change was an aircraft respray from jungle green to UN white.

On November 11, 845 embarked four aircraft, 37 vehicles and all the associated equipment and personnel in RFA Argus and set out for Split on the coast of Croatia. On arrival it was agreed that the squadron would operate alongside Croatian and French helicopters at an old seaplane station – Divulje Barracks – ten miles along the coast from Split.

Basic DIY was carried out on the ransacked accommodation block which became known as the Split Sheraton.

From the outset our operational task was defined as casualty evacuation of UN personnel in Croatia or Bosnia. It was not without its hazards.

The weather in Bosnia is unpredictable and highly changeable, particularly in winter. Crews had to battle through snow storms, low cloud, poor visibility and turbulent conditions to get casualties to hospital.

The terrain is also unforgiving – mountain ranges with their tops shrouded in cloud meant aircrews were forced to stick to flying in valleys, and had to keep a sharp eye for lethal electricity wires strung across the valley and not marked on the maps.

Often these missions had to be flown at night, without the option of being able to climb to a safe altitude – fatal icing could occur in cloud – or being able to land in a field due to the probability of it being heavily mined.

If the hazards of marginal weather and a harsh environment were not enough, crews also had to contend with being fired upon by hostile troops. On August 10, 1994, Lt Cdr Ric Fox, Lt Darren Manser and CPOACMN Dodds came under fire while lifting from Sarajevo. CPO Dodds was hit in the chest by shrapnel, but escaped serious injury thanks to his flak jacket.

A month later Lt Cdr Fox and his crew were again the targets for light machine-gun fire, PO Byrne narrowly being missed when a bullet passed through the cabin. There were many other times when aircraft were damaged by gunfire. Luckily no one was injured, and the squadron engineers always worked around the clock to get the aircraft flying again as soon as possible.

In addition to its primary role, 845 became increasingly involved in humanitarian missions. One such, Operation Angel, entailed flying into besieged enclaves in eastern Bosnia to evacuate injured refugees and UN personnel from the ever-tightening grip of the Bosnian Serb army.

After one such mission in December 1993, members of 845 were honoured for their courage when they flew into Srebrenica to recover UN personnel. At the time the surrounded town was under heavy attack by mortar fire.

Lt (now Lt Cdr) Kevin Smith was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air and Lt Jim Cobbett was awarded the Joint Commander's Commendation.

For their actions in similar situa-

tions, Lt Cdrs Neil Thompson and Ric Fox gained the Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air and the Joint Force Commander's Commendation respectively.

Air Force Crosses were awarded to Lt Cdrs George Wallace and John Snowball, and to Army Air Corps officers Capt Andy Icton and Maj David Mayer who were attached to the squadron at the time. Lt Cdrs David Lord, Philip Doynne-Ditmus and Michael Abbey were made MBEs, and Lt Tim Kelly received a Mention in Despatches.

In December 1995 the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed and UNPROFOR – UN Protection Force – was replaced by the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) to ensure that the peace was observed by all sides.

At this time our aircraft acquired a stripy camouflage scheme – and since then the only alteration in their livery until they came home was the change in lettering on their fuselage from IFOR to SFOR – Stabilisation Force.

Throughout our eight-year deployment, the longest of any British unit in the Balkans, 845 has had its share of VIP visitors including the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal, the Duke of Kent, Prime Minister John Major, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd

and three Defence Ministers.

The squadron has also found time to give off-duty help to the victims of war, notably 120 severely handicapped children who were forced to flee their orphanage when it was bombed.

Re-located in a Split gymnasium, their new home was made more habitable through the squadron raising over £2,000 for them and helping to paint walls and create a fine garden with swings and seats.

We have also helped with the restoration of a World War II graveyard and the airlifting of a steeple-jack on to a rebuilt church.

In our eight years in former Yugoslavia, 845 personnel undertook three-month rotational tours of duty, later reducing to eight weeks with each squadron member completing up to five tours. We flew a total of 13,500 hours and conducted 620 medical and casualty evacuations. The aircrew and aircraft have been engaged 22 times by hostile fire and taken 28 hits with only one minor casualty.

■ As Navy News went to press, 845 aircraft were once again flying in extreme conditions – this time supporting 3 Cdo Brigade Royal Marines on exercise in northern Norway. The squadron's role in Bosnia has been handed over to a Cougar flight of the Royal Netherlands Air Force.



● All four of 845's Sea Kings fly over Bosnia in their IFOR livery on the fourth anniversary of the squadron's deployment in 1996. Two years later the squadron's strength in the region was reduced to two aircraft and about 40 personnel serving on a rotational basis.

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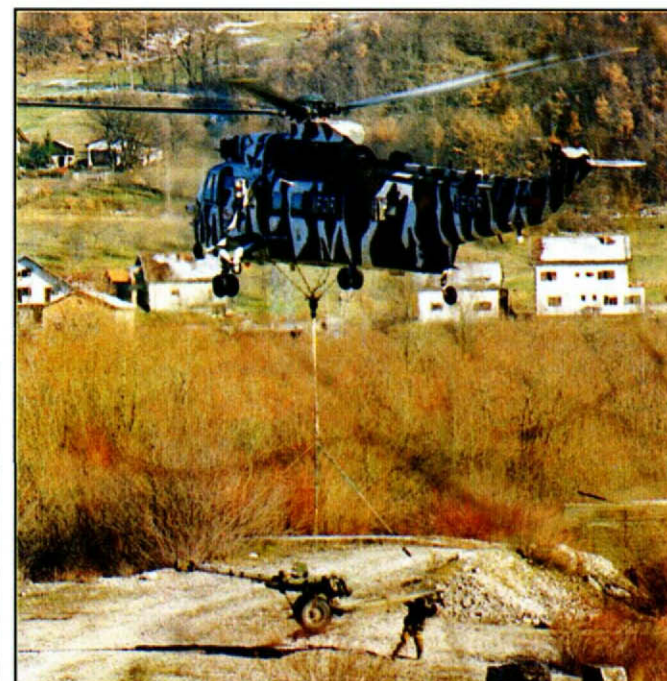


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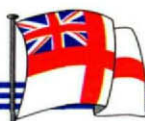
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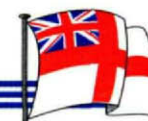
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● An 845 aircraft lifts an artillery piece into position – just one of the hundreds of tasks the squadron was called on to perform in its support role for NATO land forces in the Balkans.



Family Matters



● Foundation teacher Ceri Maher and pupils in the new classrooms at the British School, Naples.

New room for newcomers to Naples

TWO NEW classrooms have been opened at the British School, Naples to cope with the influx of children of British Servicemen and women who have taken over jobs from the Americans there.

Culdrose Preschool spreads its wings

THE LONG awaited extension to the Culdrose Community Centre has been officially opened by local MP Andrew George.

Funded mainly by grants from King George's Fund for Sailors and the Sailors Fund/Fleet Amenities Fund and with contributions from Culdrose messes and squadrons, Naval Personal and Family Services Plymouth Central Fund and the Community Centre Committee, the extension has been built primarily to rehouse the Preschool facility.

Formerly, the Preschool, which was first established some ten years ago, had its home in a converted Service Family Quarter.

However, with the recent increase in the demand for quarters the Defence Housing Executive required the property to be returned to the housing stock.

Several options for rehusing the Preschool were examined and an extension to the existing Community Centre was considered the best.

Over the past decade the Preschool has catered for hundreds of children of Service personnel and obtained a "very good" in a recent OFSTED report.

The extension was built by E.Thomas Construction – the same company which built the original building in 1995.



Danger woman

ONCE a week, Constable Jo Thompson visits the Little Shipmates Nursery at HMS Nelson, where she talks to the children about the dangers of modern life.

Road safety and accidents in the home are among the topics covered, with the help of Station Officer Pounder of the Defence Fire Service.

Also "stranger danger", for which she awards certificates in recognition of their understanding of the perils of talking to strangers.

Seen here receiving her certificate from Jo, who is the Portsmouth Naval Base Crime Reduction and Community Safety Officer, is three-year-old Sophia Molloy.

Alliance with God for Ella

HMS ALLIANCE was the venue for the christening of Ella Bound – whose grandparents met when the submarine visited Falmouth in 1967.

Mike Bound served in the boat – now the last British World War II-type preserved at the RN Submarine Museum at Gosport – from 1964-68, during a Far East Commission and a return to home waters, after which he settled in Plymouth.

Ella (2) is seen here with proud parents Gavin and Tereza Bound and the Rev Canon Ted Goodyer, of St Mary's, Alverstoke, who performed the ceremony.



● Mrs John Lippiett, wife of the senior British officer for the NATO Southern Region, receives a drawing from the foundation class of the British School, Naples, to mark the opening of their new classrooms.

The US has recently pulled some staff out to allow a greater European input.

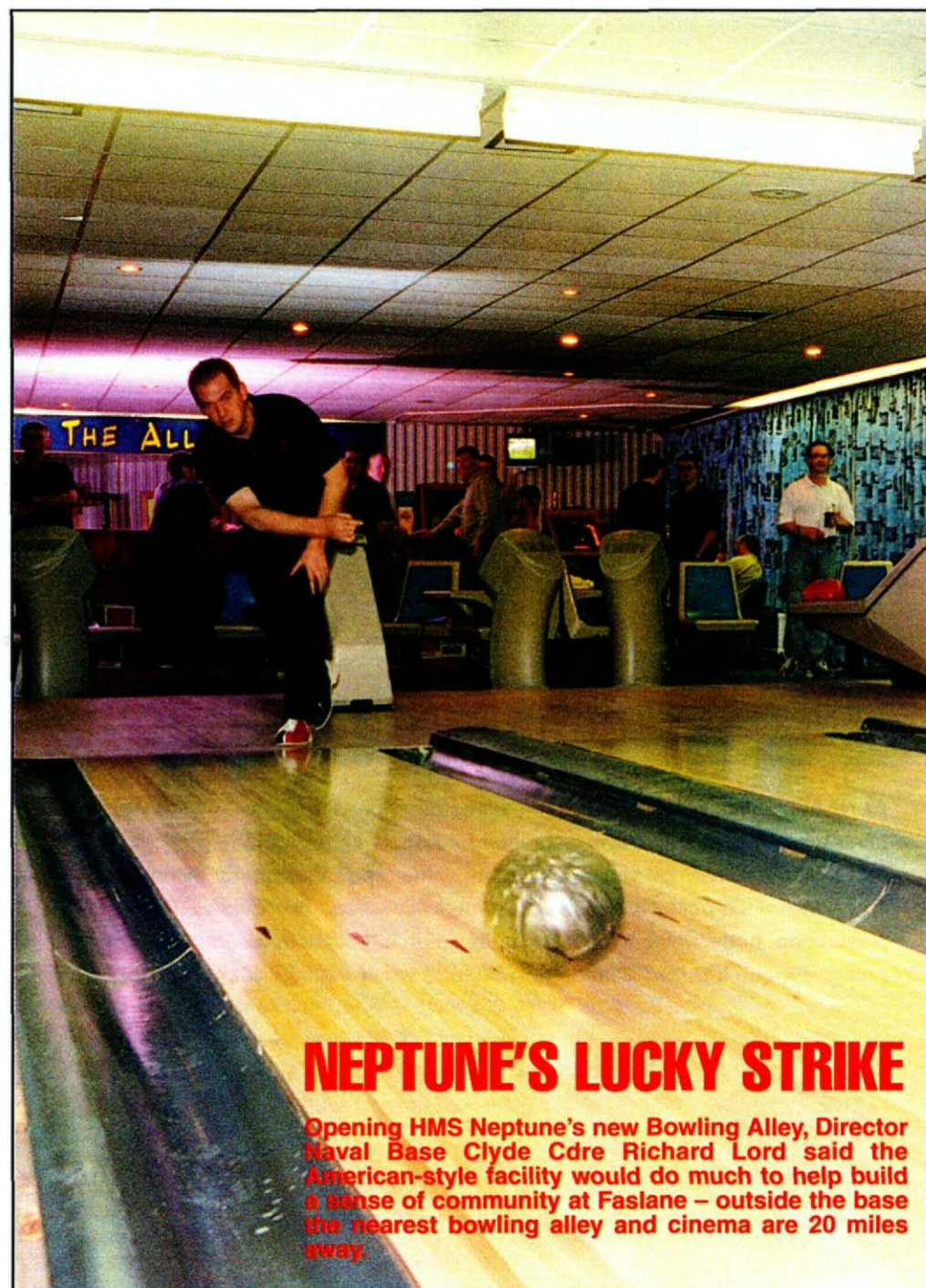
Opening ceremony was performed by the Chief of Staff to the C-in-C Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe, Rear Admiral John Lippiett.

The classrooms were built to British specifications and a British workforce was provided by the contractors, Elliott Construction, to provide the modern, light and practical teaching environment now enjoyed by the foundation pupils and their teachers Ceri Maher and Judith Walker.

Said Admiral Lippiett: "A year ago when I visited this school I was impressed by the excellent staff teaching in overcrowded conditions."

"The school has the finest reputation in the region within the British and international staff working and living in Naples. The school has gone from strength to strength and with these new classrooms will continue to do so."

Admiral Lippiett concluded by paying tribute to departing head-teacher Ian Hemelik – whose send-off was graced by a five-man band of members of COMNAVSOUTH's band at Naples.



NEPTUNE'S LUCKY STRIKE

Opening HMS Neptune's new Bowling Alley, Director Naval Base Clyde Cdre Richard Lord said the American-style facility would do much to help build a sense of community at Faslane – outside the base the nearest bowling alley and cinema are 20 miles away.





'He stayed in the kitchen and he took the heat'

Dudley Pound – anchored to duty

Dudley Pound's reputation has always deserved better. He was one of the most important and influential naval chiefs of World War II yet he has had to wait nearly 60 years for a dedicated biography.

With Churchill's Anchor (Leo Cooper £25) Robin Brodhurst has set the record straight. It is an apt title that describes an important facet of his achievement as First Sea Lord, a post he held from July 1939 until shortly before his death on Trafalgar Day, 1943.

One of the criticisms made of Pound was that he failed to stand up to Churchill when the interests of the Navy demanded that he should. In fact, as is clearly shown here, he pulled no punches when giving his professional opinion – and his advice frequently prevailed.

Of the occasions when it did not, the one that led to the loss of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse is the one that perhaps caused most blame to be attached to him.

What, though, had been his options, Brodhurst asks?

"Firstly, he could have offered his resignation rather than despatch what he knew to be an unbalanced fleet. However, there can be little doubt that Churchill and Alexander would simply have appointed somebody who would have done their bidding.

"Cunningham was not yet ready to be moved from the

Mediterranean. Indeed, only recently he had offered his own resignation if the Admiralty had desired it. Thus Pound had little option but to bow to political pressure, as is correct: politicians must ultimately take the decisions in war.

"Secondly, he could have tried to send out a balanced force. However, given the losses of the Royal Navy in late 1941, there was little or no prospect of this. He was faced with the prospect of what had become a one-ocean Navy trying to fight a three-ocean war.

"Thirdly, he could have sent out an experienced admiral. Here there are more valid grounds for criticism. He could have sent Phillips either to Force H or to the Mediterranean Fleet, and sent either Somerville or Cunningham to Singapore, or even have sent Phillips as second-in-command to either of them.

"However, it is reasonable to ask whether either Somerville or Cunningham would have acted very differently in the circumstances . . ."

Another common criticism of Pound is that he hung on to office long after his failing health required a younger man to take over.

In fact, all accounts suggest that there was no real evidence of deterioration until the summer of 1943 when the brain tumour that would soon kill him began to take its toll. Pound was then 65 – and for several years had been

working an 18-hour day with little respite.

"Duty was all to him. Sometimes in life that duty means knowing when to step down, but this higher conception of sacrifice is enormously difficult to realise when things are going badly. For much of 1942 and 1943 that was indeed the case."

In any case, who was there to take over from him? The author observes that Cunningham, the obvious choice, might have been the Navy's premier sailor, but he had extremely limited experience of Whitehall. Pound must have longed to retire – he had not wanted the job in 1939, but had taken it out of duty. And he saw it as his duty to see the thing through as long as he could.

His relationship with Churchill was a key item in his contribution to the war effort – particularly in restraining the Prime Minister's wilder ideas. Very often, when things went wrong, he took the blame – with stoic dignity – that should have been apportioned elsewhere.

The conclusion here is that Pound took the job on because there was nobody else and he shouldered the burden as best he could.

"He is not a Roosevelt figure; rather he is like Truman, and like Truman he stayed in the kitchen and he took the heat."



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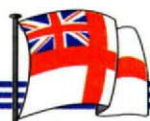
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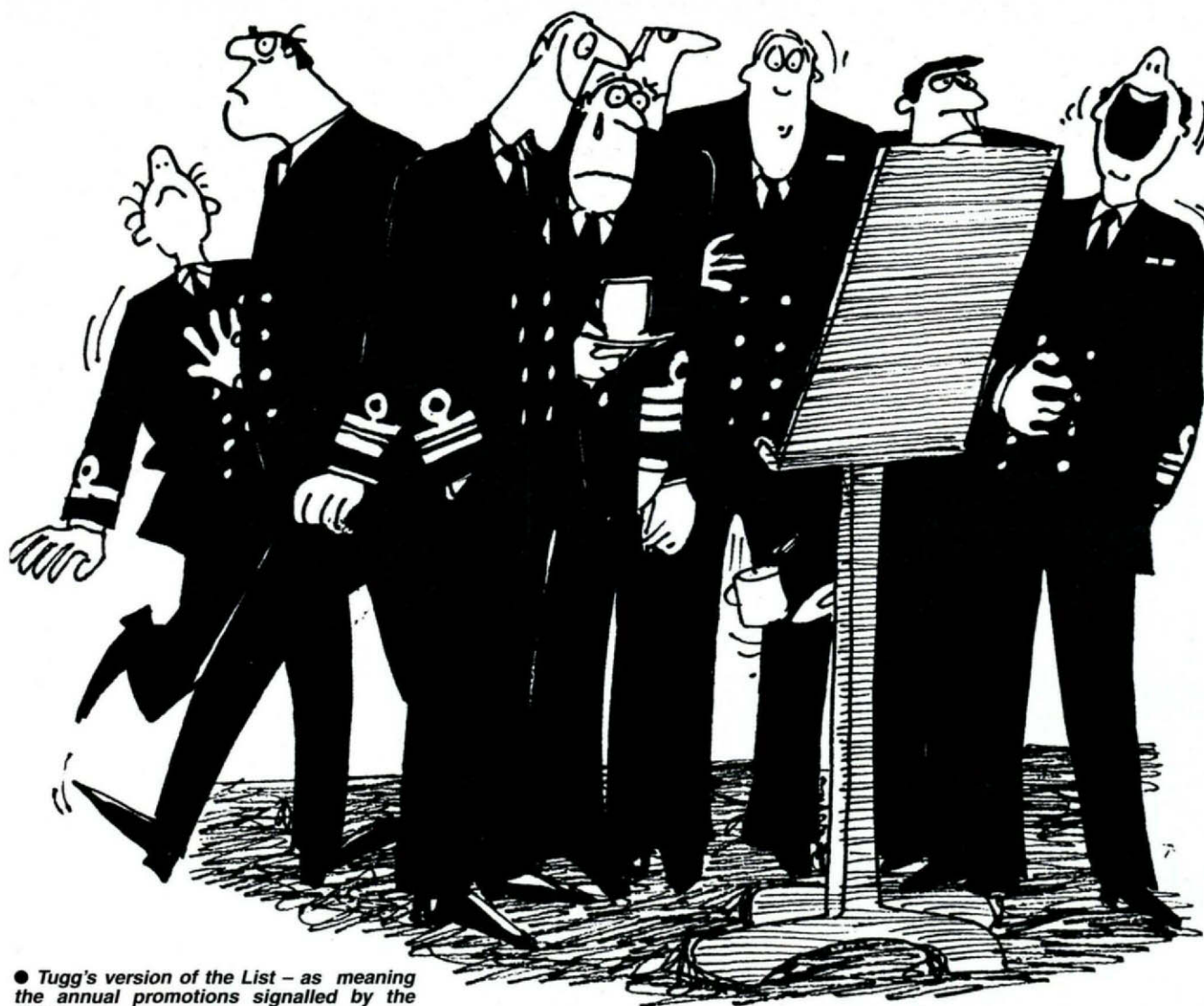
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Know what a 'ponti' is, then?

ScreenScene

– by Bob Baker

Angels stick to a winning formula

AT PRESENT she will be no more than a bump on her Mum's tum, but let a couple of decades pass and, going on present trends, the young lady concerned will be fulfilling her ineffable destiny: playing *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the 2020 remake.

The current update-cum-rehash is **Charlie's Angels**, and it sticks very closely to the formula of the original series, which first aired back in 1976. Three glamorous crime-fighters in the employ of Charlie, unseen millionaire mastermind, are instructed to bust some major miscreant.

Angels go undercover, Angels are unmasked, Angels turn tables. Exit miscreant, duly busted, while our heroines return to base to await their next assignment.

Feminists of a quarter-century ago tended to welcome the Angels for their interloping on to what had previously been a male-dominated genre. But one of the original stars, Kate Jackson, gave away the show's main agenda: "We noticed the ratings went up the more we left off wearing our bras."

The director of the new version, crediting himself as "McG", used to be a maker of pop videos – which shows – and anything resembling a subtle or even vaguely original idea would die of embarrassment in the context of such by-the-numbers conformity.

No, Kate Jackson explained the essence of it precisely. The film's silver hook is the sight of three

THE NEW, much expanded edition of Rick Jolly's Jackspeak guide to British Naval slang gives the lie to the view, often expressed these days, that this is a dying language.

No fewer than 180 extra pages have been added to the original 1989 classic – and these include words and phrases of recent invention as well as some of the more obscure ones whose origins are buried in the bubbly-hazed mists of time.

We now have, for instance, *electric dit* (fax machine); *pony* (Lynx helicopter); and *ponti* (a Person Of No Tactical Importance). The new Jackspeak, which also carries a set of new cartoons by Tugg, is available from Maritime Books at £9.95 (Tel 01579 343663).

The author's royalties will be donated to the South Atlantic Medal Association (1982)'s unique electronic Garden of Remembrance, which may be visited at www.sama82.org.co.uk

beautiful young women (Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu) dashing about inconsequentially, while wearing nothing very much, thank you, but staying safely within the parameters of a 15-certificate.

Can such a concept really sustain interest for 98 minutes? From a hundred thousand male throats came the answer: bet your sweet life it can!

The quite pleasing premise of the new comedy **Cecil B Demented** is that a bunch of serious movie-lovers, outraged by bland mainstream fare like **Charlie's Angels**, decide to become cinematic terrorists.

Calling themselves the Sprocket Holes, they mount a series of outrages: disrupting a screening of *Patch Adams: The Director's Cut*, and raiding the set of a sequel to *Forrest Gump*, plausibly entitled *Gump Again*. In a faint echo of what happened to Patty Hearst (who, middle-aged now, has a small role in the picture) they kidnap a famous film star, played by Melanie Griffiths, and convert her to their aims.

Cecil B Demented satirises fanaticism – only their comical cause separates the Sprockets from any other terrorist group – just as it takes the mick out of the sanctimonious *Adams/Gump* tendency. But a broad streak of gross-out humour suggests the sort of crowd-pleasing condescension that by rights ought to have the Sprockets picketing their own movie.

● A late-modernised Lynx AH Mk 7 operated by 847 Naval Air Squadron with thermal sighting system operating with TOW missiles and door gun in the light utility role.
– From Air Assault from the Sea by Patrick Allen (Airlife £18.95)



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At Your Service

Over to You

Blue Mariners: Jan Zawada seeks information and contacts for anyone connected with the RN Big Band, named the Blue Mariners, formed during WWII. The band was directed by George Crowe and featured talented saxophonist Freddie Gardner, and co-existed with the Army Ordnance Big Band (the Blue Rockets) and Glenn Miller's Allied Expeditionary Army Air Force Band. Contact Jan at 2, Glendale, Locks Heath, Southampton SO31 6UL, e-mail: jan@trumpet1.com

HMS Raleigh: Whilst stationed at Raleigh in 1951 J.E. Best recalls having to draw on graph paper parts of engine and boiler room machinery, eg robot feed regulator, condenser, reciprocating steam pump. Can anyone provide copies? Write to 38, Station Rd, Kidwell, Llanelli SA17 4UT.

HMS Warrior, Northwood 1993: Jim Sangster seeks Mark ('Yorkie'), who worked in the accommodation office, was married to an ex-WPTI, had a small son, lived in Atria Rd and used to help in the carpenters shop. He made an item which Jim wants to return to him - contact Jim at 170, Prestwick Rd, Watford WD19 6LE, tel: 020 8386 3787

British Seamen's Orphan Boys Home, Brixham: Anyone wishing to join this association should contact John Northcote-Brewer, 31, Legis Walk, Plymouth PL6 7DE, tel: 01752 783064, e-mail: john@northcote-brewer.freeserve.co.uk

Historian (British Academy scholar) seeks assistance from naval personnel of all ranks who served in stores and supply departments between 1930 and 1960. Also seeks personnel who joined the Upper Yardmen scheme during the 1940s and 1950s. Contact Quintin Colville, 5, St John's Church Rd, London E9 6EJ, tel: 020 8985 4007, e-mail: quintin.colville@btinternet.com

Malcolm Richard Causar and John Britnell: Seeking info on where these two midge-submarine crew members came from. Contact B.P. Jackson, 'The Kedger', Oak Meadow, Birdham, Chichester PO20 7BH, e-mail: kedger@compuserve.com

PO Cunningham 'Cup': P.J. Pickwick has a silver cup, 8" high, 5" diameter with two curved handles. Opposite the inscription PO Cunningham is inscribed 1962 L/S D Hargreaves, 1963 A/B R Horabin, 1964 P/O Whitehead, 1965 P/O Fisher, 1966 A/B S Beech. If any of these persons wants to claim it, or anyone knows its purpose, contact Mr Pickwick, 3, Adlington Hall Mews, Adlington Hall, Mill Lane, Cheshire SK10 4LF.

HMS Constance: Ernie Balderson seeks a copy of the song music China Nights sung in Chinese, a favourite on the China Station 1949-50 - his copy has deteriorated. Ernie would appreciate a copy before the reunion in May. Contact him at 43, Old Place, Sleaford NG34 7HR, tel: 01529 413410.

Walpole - Windsor Baton, 1932: The

family want to learn more about the inscription on a trophy cup. Contact Miss M.E.M. Stephens on 01634 713274

Paul Jaesake: Joined the Navy around 1987-9 and was last heard of travelling around Majorca. Lachlan McLaren has some important news for him. He was of stocky build with swept-back hair, 6ft tall and had a German background. If anyone knows of him, contact Lachlan on 07803 737531 or e-mail: Lachlanmclaren@aol.com

HMS Gurkha: Torstein Saksvik seeks crew members from this Tribal-class destroyer, sunk off the west coast of Norway on April 9, 1940, with the loss of 16 sailors, 12 of whom were never found. A memorial plaque is now unveiled at the North Sea Traffic Museum at Telvaag, and the museum has a small exhibition on the last hours of the ship. Contact Torstein at Box 20, 5373, Klokkevik, Norway, or email: tsaksvik@online.no

HMS Pembroke (RNB Chatham), Kent: Sam Watson is researching the site for the University of Greenwich and requires photos of the sickbay and the adjacent building, GU or dental department building, which have been demolished for a link road. Photos and other material will be copied and returned, post paid. Any other photos, info and anecdotes of Pembroke also be appreciated. Write to 9, Gilbert Close, Hempstead, Gillingham, ME7 3QQ, tel: 01634 235861, email: sam@samjan.demon.co.uk

Cricketer Class Ships: Paul W. Brain seeks photos and info on HM ships Hammond, Jardine, Larwood and Bradman, all possibly former trawlers hired by the Admiralty in 1939. Any info to Paul W Brain JP (NSW), 5, Orchard Close, Ockbrook, Derbyshire DE72 3RQ.

(Isobel) Anne Batson nee Symons: T.S. Symons seeks info about his older sister, last seen in 1944 when she and her husband, Lt Cdr Batson, were at North Queensferry. She was in the Wrens, he was a submariner. Anne (she did not use her first name) was born in Totnes, one of four children - Thomas, Tony and Pat. If you can help, contact T.S. Symons, Ludwell House, Ludwell Lane, Exeter EX2 5AQ, tel: 01392 273615.

Lt Cdr Richard Harold Williams, FAA: D.J. Bloodworth seeks photos of him in uniform, or any medals. He served between 1933 and 1964 and was involved in the ship rescue in the Pentland Firth in 1956. Contact D.J. Bloodworth, 29, Wilton Road, Shanklin, Isle of Wight PO37 7DA, tel: 01983 864532.

HMS Royal Oak: Seeking information and photographs of E.C. Leach's uncle, AB Eric Slack, who died when Royal Oak was sunk at Scapa Flow in WWII. The only information known is that he was in the gunnery department. Contact E.C. Leach, Moles End, 44, Kingsway, Nesscliffe, Shrewsbury SY4 1BG, tel/fax: 01743 741603.

Reunions

February

HMS St Austell Bay 1945-56: Reunion at Cheltenham on February 24. Contact Doug Hughes, 19, Kipling Rd, St Marks, Cheltenham GL51 7DJ, tel: 01242 691259 for full details.

March

HMS Arun (River-class patrol ship) 1994-98: All members of crew and Royals who served on board are invited. Date and venue for reunion now confirmed. For further information and tickets send SAE to 'Simmo', HMS Sandown, BFPO 379.

West Country Association of Royal Naval Writers reunion dinner at HMS Drake on March 10. Anyone who has ever worn the Writer's Star - including ladies - will be most welcome, together with their partner. Details from D.G. Jewell, 35 Broad Walk, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 4NT, tel: 01752 843416, e-mail: westnwriter@aol.com

HMS Fisgard Association luncheon reunion is at the Nautical Club, Birmingham, on March 10. Members and non-members who are old boys of HMS Fisgard or the Fisgard Squadron (HMS Raleigh) who would like to attend should contact Des Goodwin at 36, Southbrook Rd, Langstone, Havant PO9 1RN, tel: 023 9247 2384.

HMS Cardiff - Operation Desert Storm: A reunion for all crew members of HMS Cardiff who served during this operation takes place in Portsmouth on March 17, to mark the tenth anniversary of the ship's return. Contact Mick Gentry on 0777 163 2922, or Chris Running at HMS Collingwood, 01329 332757 (mil: 93825 2757).

HMS Protector: Former netlayer and Antarctic patrol ship, seeking ex-ship's company from all commissions. Reunion in Gosport March 17. Please contact Bill Bartlett on 01202 480767.

HMS Glory Association (1943-56) reunion and AGM on March 17 at the Nautical Club, Birmingham. Details from Peter Wardle, 91, Dingley Road, Olney, Bucks MK46 5EU, tel: 01234 471161.

Destroyer Club dinner on March 28 in the Cunliffe Owen Room of the Naval Club, 38, Hill Street, London, for all current and former Commanding Officers of RN destroyers. Details of club and dinner from Cdr Paul Cook, DNO AWW, Room 5357, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB.

HMS Collingwood Association reunion from March 30 to April 2 at the Trecarn Hotel, Babbacombe. All ex-Collingwood are entitled to join. Contact Mike Crowe, 7, Heath Rd, Lake, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 8PG, or Ray Ellis on 01895 444750.

HMS Nuthatch Association reunion March 30 to April 2, Charnwood Hotel, Skegness; details from Roy Crossley, 42, Knaping Hill, Harrogate HG1 2DN, tel: 01423 567994, e-mail: roycrossley@cwctv.net

HMS Duke of York will be holding a mini-weekend at Stretton Hotel, Blackpool, from March 30 to April 1. Details from R. Draper, Rose Cottage, 103, Orchard Park, Elton, Chester CH2 4NQ, tel: 01928 725175.

April

HMS Wizard and HMS Cadiz Association AGM at Portsmouth in April. All commissions, ranks and rates are welcome. Details from Tom Fox, Maroheto, Church Lane, Meriden, Coventry CV7 7HX, tel: 01676 523296.

RNXX (East Anglia) reunion at 12.00 on April 1 in the 'Shipwreck', Shotley Marina (old Enright Block, HMS Ganges). Details from Peter Brooke, 7, Penn Close, Capel St Mary, Ipswich IP9 2UE, tel: 01473 310189.

HMS Dunedin: First reunion, in 60th anniversary year of the ship's sinking, is at Leighton Riverside Pavilion, Henley-upon-Thames, on April 7. Contact Lt Cdr Chris Broadway at Ridge End, Stanaway Hill, Torquay TQ1 4ER, tel: 01803 329819, e-mail: chris@ridgeend.swinternet.co.uk

The V and W Destroyer Association reunion is in Great Yarmouth from April 20 to 23. Enquiries to C. Fairweather, Stable Cottage, West Bergholt, Colchester CO6 3JQ, tel: 01206 240614.

480 Kings Squad Royal Marines: 54th anniversary reunion at the Home Club, Portsmouth, April 23 to 25. Details from Len Holmes, 57, Jones Lane, Hythe, Southampton SO4 6AW, tel: 023 8084 2284, or Peter Hodges, 11, Goffton Ave, Cosham, Portsmouth PO6 2NG, tel: 023 9237 5621.

846 NAS (1943-45) annual reunion is on April 28 at the Portland Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Ted Billingham, 01902 850517.

Loch-class Frigates Association (incl Bays etc) reunion at Babbacombe, April 27 to 29. Contact Secretary, 1, Wallhouse Close, Wallsall WS1 2BJ, tel: 01922 620494, e-mail: LochClass@aol.com, or 01628 523711, or edwardfreathy@aol.com

At your Service entries

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to - The Editor, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. PO1 3HH or email: edit@navynews.co.uk. If you are sending your notice in via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

■ Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

■ Please send in Reunions at least three months (preferably four) before the month of the event.

■ There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

■ Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

■ The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

■ Space does not allow us to accept more than one free insert. Any subsequent notice will have to be paid for at advertising rates.

May

Ton Class Minesweepers Association: West of London, Spring-time lunch reunion at High Wycombe in May. Contact Edward Freathy, Marlow Road, Bourne End, Bucks SL8 5NL, tel: 01628 523711, or e-mail: edwardfreathy@aol.com

HMS Magpie reunion on May 4 at the Crimond Hotel, Southport. Details from Tom Iddon on 01704 541567.

HMS Gambia Association mini-reunion at Eastbourne from May 4 to 7. All ex-crew members welcome. Details: Les Newman, 3, Coppice Rd, Whitnash, Leamington Spa CV31 2JE, tel: 01926 831599.

HMS Redoubt reunion lunch at Victory Services Club, Seymour St, London W2 2HF, on May 8. Details from Lt Cdr Doug Wiltcher (Rtd), 7, Elmbridge Ave, Surbiton KT5 9EX.

Algerines Association (Fleet Minesweepers) 1942-62 reunion at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, from May 10 to 14. Any ex-serving personnel and/or their dependants and prospective new members can get further details from George Patience, tel/fax: 01456 450659.

HMS Victorious (1941-45) Association reunion: Personnel of all ranks and branches who served on board are welcome with their partners to the reunion in Yeovil from May 11 to 13. Details from Mansel Evans, Bryn Deryn, Lon Yr Eglwys, St Brides Major, Bridgend CF32 0SH, tel: 01656 880459.

LST & Landing Craft Association reunion is at Sand Bay Holiday Village, Kewstoke, Weston-super-Mare from May 18 to 18 a Remembrance Service at Bristol Cathedral on May 16. Details from Mike Cresswell, 1, Gamrudding, Green Lane, North Duffield, Selby, North Yorkshire YO8 5RR, tel: 01757 288752 or e-mail: mike@gamrudding.freeserve.co.uk

Landing Craft Gun & Flak Association are re-dedicating their Memorial in the Rose Garden of the Royal Marines Museum, Eastney, during their next reunion from May 15 to 17. The service will be on May 17 at 11am. In the event of bad weather it will be in the Mountbatten Room. Details from Vernon Copeland, 82, Clifford Bridge Rd, Binley, Coventry CV3 2DZ, tel: 0242 7645 1645

HMS Hermione Association reunion at the Chesterfield Hotel, Chesterfield, from May 18 to 20. Details from Steve Brotherton,

37, McCarthy Close, Birchwood, Warrington WA3 6RS tel: 01925 824504, or visit our website at www.HMSHermione.co.uk

HMS Revenge, 1939-42 reunion at Portsmouth on May 18. Contact Len Rose on 01903 767592.

HMS Barham Survivors Association reunion (17.30 for 18.00) on May 19 at the Royal Sailors Home Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth. Details from George Elliott, Flat 4, Greenwich Court, 25, King St, Southsea PO5 4EU, tel: 023 9275 5734.

HMS Swiftsure Association, Cruiser and Submarine lunch reunion on May 19 at T/S Swiftsure, Aldershot; annual reunion in October in Cheshire. Details from David George, 'Mullion', Shipton Green, Itchenor, Chichester PO20 7BZ, tel: 01243 512998.

HMS Faulknor Association reunion May 22-24 at the Home Club, Portsmouth. Details: C. Heiler, 89, Bowers Rd, Benfleet, Essex SS17 1BH, tel: 01268 756141.

Submarine Coxswains Association reunion at Fort Blockhouse May 25 to 26. Contact Sterling Hayden on 01329 315913.

June

Combined ex-Services Association annual reunion at Bridlington, June 15 to 17. All Standard Bearers welcome - F.O.C. Contact Audrey G. Bealstall on 01622 673101.

523 and 524 Recruit Squads, Royal Marines hold their next reunion on June 23 at the Home Club, Portsmouth. Contact George Chandler on 023 9241 2895 or Don Pimp at 92, Pound Rd, East Peckham, Tonbridge TN12 5BJ, tel: 01622 871573.

August

Fourth Destroyer Squadron Association (Agincourt, Aisne, Alamein, Barrosa, Corunna, Dinkirk, Jutland, Matapan) reunion in Coventry during August. Contact Terry Parker on 01303 249242 or e-mail: d97corunna@aol.com for details.

HMS Duke of York reunion and AGM at King Charles Hotel, Gillingham, Kent from August 31 to September 2. Details from R. Draper, Rose Cottage, 103, Orchard Park, Elton, Chester CH2 4NQ, tel: 01928 725175.

September

Calling Old Shipmates

HMS Aurora 1967-69: Alan Jones from Bolton (League of Pity) is looking for 'Spillers' Wonnacott, 'Horse' Horseman, Charlie Hurley, 'Durks' Durkin, 'Moish' King, 'Heather' Hatcher, Tom Farrow, 'Murs' Murlford, 'Scoops' Cooper and any other Greenies from 3L Alt mess, who did the 12-month world cruise, to meet for a drink and a chin-wag. Ring Jonesey on 0191 416 1941 or e-mail: jonesey1@talk21.com

HMS Shoreham: Southampton ship-builder Vosper Thornycroft launch this Sandown-class minehunter on April 9. They are keen to contact anyone who served in the first HMS Shoreham (a sloop launched in 1930) who may be able to attend the launch. If you know of anyone who served in her, please ask them to contact Carol Freeman, Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive, Vosper Thornycroft, Southampton, tel: 023 8042 6100.

HMS Zulu, 9th Frigate Squadron, Persian Gulf 1964-65: John Wheeler, who was casevaced home from Aden around April 1965, would like to contact any shipmates from the Comms division. He would also like a copy of the commissioning book as he didn't receive his due to his early return to the UK. Contact John at 7, Newbold Terrace, York Road, Doncaster DN5 8HR, tel: 01302 782422.

HMS Albion 1962-64 Commission: Calling all ship's company, including RM Detachment, 40, 42 Commando RM, 845 & 846 Squadrons. 60+ already in contact. Second reunion planned. Details from Keith Ridley, 18, Littleworth End, Offord Darcy, St Neots, Cambs PE19 5RA, tel: 01480 810848 or e-mail: hmsalbin@hotmail.com

Kenneth H. Rowland is looking for men he served with during WWII in the Fleet Air Arm, on light carriers HMS Speaker, and later on 892 Squadron on HMS Ocean. Contact Kenneth at 10200 W. Maple #355 H, Wichita, Kansas 67209, USA, tel: 1 316 727267, or e-mail: bjhys@memorycatchers.com

HMS Terpsichore: B.J. Salter is keen to contact anyone who served on destroyer HMS Terpsichore from December 1944 until Tokyo Bay Surrender signing, and who remembers his father, a New Zealander, Leading Signaller Frank Salter. Write to B.J. Salter, 152, Dome Street, Newfield, Invercargill, New Zealand or e-mail bjsalter@ihug.co.nz

Ex-PO Tony Parker: Paul O'Neill seeks Tony, last known working as IT engineer for a company in Bath. While Paul was serving at MOD Bath on the RM OASIS Support Desk Tony and he became good shipmates, but Paul has lost his contact number in the past eighteen months. Tony lives in Plymouth and worked in air traffic control. If any shipmates have a contact number, contact Paul at 9, Somerset Road, Walmer, Deal CT14 7TD, or e-mail: Paul@carolynne.fsnet.co.uk

HMS Chaplet: Denis Broadbent has made some contacts with old shipmates that served in the ship during the days of Cyprus Patrol and the Suez Crisis. He is still interested in hearing from anyone who remembers those days and wants to recall some of the events. Also any photos if anyone has any; in particular photos taken on the trip to Aqaba and Petra as Denis is writing a bit of an autobiography for family members who may wonder about the things he got up to. Contact Denis at 41, Culver Place, Christchurch 8007, New Zealand or at denisbroadbent@xtra.co.nz

Ex-Wren Jenny Shaw (79-85) now living in Michigan, USA, seeks good friends Nick and Helen Kincart - last address Jenny has was in Fratton, but they lost touch about six years ago. Nick was a diver. She would also like to hear from anyone else who remembers her, from Rosyth, Hong Kong or Naples. Jenny is hopeless with names, but a few that spring to mind are Biffo Bruin, Trevor Chrich, Eddie Driver, Chris Fry, Kev Pounder (from Hartlepool) and Dave Coleman. Write to 79, Hamata, Hazel Park, MI 48030, USA, or email: jenthewren@aol.com

John (Haggis) Anderson: Kevin (Slinger) Wood is trying to locate John, who joined HMS Ganges in September 1970. He came from Aberdeen, and his stepfather was Lt Douglas, who at the time ran Aberdeen Recruiting Office. Kevin last saw John in 1971 when he was on the Eagle. Lt Douglas

HMS Pheasant 1943-47 Association hold their next reunion at Alveston Hall Hotel, Nantwich, Cheshire, in September. All shipmates welcome. Contact B. Dowling, 1, Dymchurch Close, Clayhall, Ilford IG5 0LB, tel: 020 8924 9158.

HMS Diomed: 30th anniversary of the first commissioning on Sept 15 at the Holiday Inn, Leicester (tel: 0116 253 1161). Details from James M. Fairlie on 01455 286480.

October

HMS Daring (1952-54) reunion is at Thoresby Hall, Nottinghamshire, from October 5 to 8. Details from Owen Simpson, 20, Green Close, Uley, Glos, tel: 01453 860564, e-mail: simpsonowen@hotmail.com

HMS Cardigan Bay next reunion is at the Norbreck Hotel, Scarborough, from October 5 to 8. Details from Michael Solomons on 01977 676072, Donny Grier on 01294 465192, or Bob Hackett on 0121 449 5989, or e-mail: roberthackett@amserve.net

2001 Trafalgar Reunion takes place at the Kiriabli Ex-Services Club, Lavender Bay, from October 19 to 21. Registration forms can be obtained from RNA Secretaries or direct from John Lees, 130, River Road, Emu Plains, NSW 2750, Australia, tel: (02) 4735 5814, or e-mail: marine@eagles.com.au

December

HM ships Prince of Wales/Repulse: A group visit is being made to Singapore and Malaysia in December to mark the 60th anniversary of the sinking on December 10, 1941. There will be a Service of Remembrance over the wrecks on the anniversary. Details from Remembrance Travel, RBL Village, Aylesford ME210 7NX, tel: 01622 716729 or 716182, fax 01622 715768, e-mail: remembrancetravel@british-legion.org.uk

June 2002

St. Georges Service School, Hong Kong: Did you attend St. Georges at any time in the past? A reunion is planned for 2002. Please sign on to the website at <http://www.saintgeorges-hk.com>

Navy News on tape

NAVY News is available free of charge on tape from Portsmouth Area Talking News for those with difficulty reading normal type.

For more details, contact 023 9269 0851 and leave a message on the answerphone with a contact telephone number. No special equipment is required to play the tapes, which are standard 90-minute cassettes.



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Changi artefacts

ARTEFACTS and memorabilia of prisoners of war held at Changi Prison in Singapore are sought by curators at the museum.

The museum, first opened in 1988, commemorates more than 7,000 Allied personnel held by the Japanese during the Second World War.

A dedication service on February 15 marks the official re-opening of the museum and chapel.

But there is still a need for more items, such as diaries, and memoirs or stories, to illustrate the era.

Contributions should be made to Sinead Kelly, Senior Account Executive, Red Consultancy, 77, Wimpole Street, London W1M 7DD.

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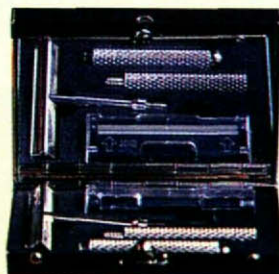
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JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER: A NEW ERA IN NAVAL AVIATION

'The best aircraft of its type in the world'

■ Continued from Page One

Strike Fighter will not simply replace the Harrier. It will give the UK an aircraft that can take off from an aircraft carrier and provide the agility of a light fighter with the punch of a bomber. Put simply, it will be the best aircraft of its type in the world."

Two companies, Boeing and Lockheed Martin, are competing for the right to build the JSF and the deal signed with America will allow the Ministry of Defence to take part in the crucial decision as to which of the prototypes should go into production.

That process starts in February and the final decision in the 'winner takes all' competition is expected to be made in the autumn. The manufacturing development stage will then begin and the aircraft will go into full production in 2008 for an in-service date of 2011 or 2012 when the first of the Navy's new carriers joins the Fleet.

Before backing the Joint Strike Fighter for its future carriers the MOD carefully considered all other options including a naval version of the Eurofighter (232 Eurofighters are ordered for the RAF) the American F18E, the French Rafale and an updated Harrier.

But the Joint Strike Fighter emerged as the best option, and the preferred variant is the short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) version of the aircraft which is to be put through its paces in California.

British experts have been intimately involved in the development of both the Boeing X-32 and Lockheed Martin X-35 prototypes and Lt Cdr Paul Stone, a Fleet Air Arm combat pilot with more than 2,400 flying hours under his belt, became the first UK pilot to fly a Joint Strike Fighter in January.

Speaking to Navy News from Edwards Air Force Base after his 50-minute flight in the Boeing X-32A, Lt Cdr Stone said: "When you spend so much time in the simulator before actually flying the X-32, you have very high expectations of how it will perform.



"In this case, it was precisely what I expected based on all the evaluations in the simulator prior to flying the aircraft. As soon as the wheels left the ground I felt very comfortable."

During the flight he tested the X-32's handling close to the sound barrier with a series of high 'G' turns over the desert before bringing it in to land at Edwards Air Force Base.

Lt Cdr Stone said: "During the flight you are really focused on doing the flight test as accurately as possible, that's what you keep your mind on. But on recovery, coming back just before landing, I remember thinking what a great feeling it was."

"It's a great privilege, especially as a UK flier, to fly this plane. It's a very exciting period for the Fleet Air Arm and for Naval aviation... it really does signal the start of a new era."

Engine tests on Boeing's X-32B STOVL variant, which uses direct lift technology similar to the Harrier, have been completed and Lt Cdr Stone will play a key role in remaining stages of its development.

Meanwhile, Lockheed Martin's Joint Strike Fighter prototypes are also being developed at Edwards Air Force Base, with the help of the UK's X-35 test pilot, RAF Sqd Ldr Justin Paines.

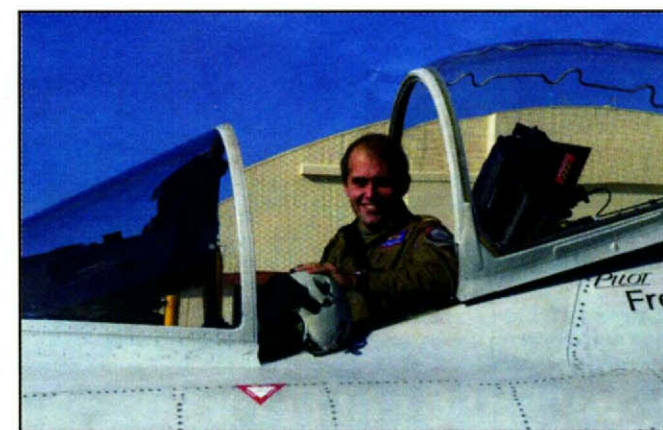
Flight testing of their conventional take-off and landing X-35A, which is designed with the US Air Force in mind, has been completed after 27 sorties, with the aircraft achieving a speed of Mach 1.05 and an altitude of 34,000ft.

During three flights in January, the X35C, which is designed for use on America's flat top carriers, completed 20 field carrier landing practices and climbed to more than 25,000ft for flying quality manoeuvres with US Navy pilot Lt Cdr Brian Goszkowicz at the controls.

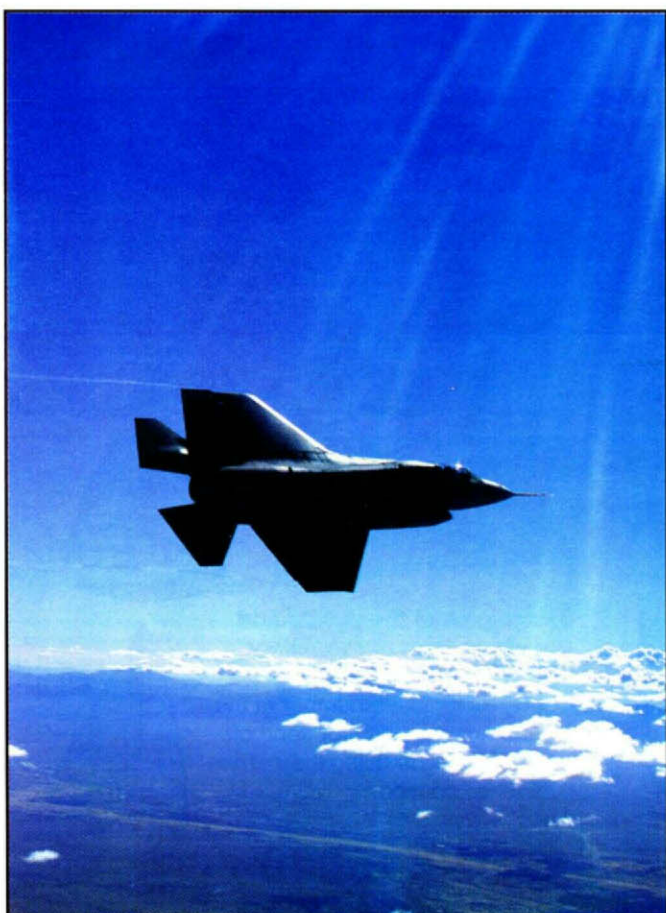
The X35C is now heading for the US Air Station at Patuxent River, Maryland, for testing at sea level.

Lockheed Martin has also fitted a shaft-driven fan in their STOVL Joint Strike Fighter, the X-35B, and hover pit trials were due to begin as Navy News went to press.

● **BLACKBIRDS:** Lockheed Martin's X-35 Joint Strike Fighter at Edwards Air Force Base in California, home of some of the most advanced aircraft in the world.



● Lt Cdr Paul Stone in the cockpit of the Boeing X-32A. He was the first British airman to fly a Joint Strike Fighter when he took it for a 50-minute test flight (below).



● **IN FLIGHT:** The Lockheed Martin Joint Strike Fighter X-35 prototype pictured over California. Lockheed Martin is in a head-to-head competition with Boeing for the contract to build the Joint Strike Fighter.



Moneywise



Taking the sting out of that festive hangover

Has the cost of Christmas left you with a financial hangover? It is estimated that during the past yuletide each Briton spent, on average, £833 on gifts, food, drink, entertainment and other festive sundries.

The bulk of that was paid for on plastic – more than £8 billion on credit cards and a further £9 billion-plus on debit cards.

If you are now counting the cost of the festivities, it is probably time for a little belt-tightening. For most people a period of short-term prudence may be all that is required – cutting out any treats or luxuries such as visits to the cinema, new clothes, and concert tickets.

However, for a minority the cost of Christmas may prove to be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The additional cost of celebrating the festive season may be too much on top of existing debts such as credit cards, store cards, loans, HP and mail-order catalogues.

For some the prospect of struggling to pay off Christmas debts along with all their other outstanding bills is horrifying. They struggle to meet the monthly minimum

repayments on credit and store cards. The initial debt never reduces and accumulating interest just means they are slipping further and further into the red.

How can they turn the tide and start moving into the black?

Many companies offer consolidation loans but these often have extortionately high interest rates – often they will merely serve to increase the burden. And never be talked into taking out a secured

loan against your property.

Those who are unable to maintain their monthly payments should contact a company which has experience in providing free debt management advice to Service people and their families. They need a sympathetic and professional service.

There are several possible solutions depending on individual circumstances. In simple cases some free telephone advice may be all

that is needed. For more complicated or serious cases there are other possibilities ranging from a fully personalised, self-help pack through to supervised informal arrangements and Individual Voluntary Arrangements.

■ This feature was provided by FCL which offers a nationwide and free debt advice service and which has ties with the Armed Services. FCL's freephone debt advice system is on 0800 716239, and operates on the Internet.

New military insurance scheme

WILSONS, a company which specialises in Armed Forces insurance cover, has launched a new scheme which has been designed to meet the needs of Service people and their families.

The scheme, Right Dress Advantage, builds on the company's existing policy Right Dress, which it says provides the full range of military insurance needs, including replacement of kit on a new-for-old basis; accidental damage cover on a worldwide basis; and cover for household goods, personal effects and clothing.

Right Dress Advantage offers the additional features of fully postcode rated household insurance and annual worldwide travel cover for policy-holders as well as their partner and up to three children. The product also offers the option of removing the military insurance element if the client leaves the Forces, resulting in a civilian

household policy with continued worldwide travel cover.

Wilsons, owned by Hogg Robinson and which provides cover for over 50,000 Armed Forces personnel, says that it is the first time that such a policy has been fully postcode rated. Cover in the past has been banded in relation to the region in which Service personnel were based.

Roy Shorland, Manager of Wilsons, said: "We believe that as so many more families are now staying at home in the UK, Service men and women should be given the chance to become holders of a postcode rated household insurance if they are based in this country."

The automatic inclusion of annual family worldwide travel also differentiated the policy, said Mr Shorland.

"Right Dress Advantage provides a one-stop-shop insurance package. If the clients choose to they can cover almost everything through it."

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10.4% APR	Monthly	216.80	165.72	373.81	322.38	956.89	878.81
	Total	18,210.57	13,920.20	13,457.18	11,605.44	11,482.68	10,545.69
12.4% APR	Monthly	114.53	87.54	191.80	165.41	482.97	443.56
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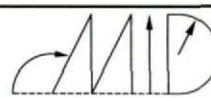
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- be skilled in project management and technical evaluation of weapons systems. Past employment with a weapons system contractor and/or as a Naval Officer involved with weapons systems will be considered a major advantage. Experience in managing contracts and subcontracts will also be considered an advantage.
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If you are interested in this opportunity, please send your CV with an accompanying letter which briefly describes how your background fits the requirement, to:

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Veteran Bulldog leaves for final surveying task

Old sea dog unleashed for last time

ONE OF the oldest ships in the Royal Navy has left Devonport for her final deployment. The survey vessel HMS Bulldog, with 32 years service behind her, has now embarked on her last task – a six-month mission which will take the 1,100-tonne ship to the Indian Ocean.



● Wartime destroyer HMS Bulldog – her renowned capture of a U-boat Enigma coding machine made an invaluable contribution to the Allies' ultimate victory.

Of Britain's active warships, only the assault ship HMS Fearless is older than the wood-decked Bulldog. Since she entered service in 1968 she has steamed 600,000 nautical miles – the equivalent of 25 times around the world – and has carried out more than 100 surveys.

Her Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Ian Sage, said her last deployment represented "an enormous challenge" for the small vessel. She will be working on her own in the Mediterranean, the Gulf as well as the Indian Ocean to collect data for use in the production of charts and



● HMS Bulldog – she left Devonport for her last deployment on January 15. Picture: PO(PHOT) Dave Coombs

other navigational publications.

She will return to Devonport in July, flying a paying-off pennant to mark the end of her operational life in the Royal Navy.

Bulldog and HMS Herald – which is due to return from a Mediterranean deployment this spring – will be replaced by newly designed vessels named HMS Echo and HMS Enterprise due to enter service next

year and in 2003 respectively. They will be equipped with the latest survey systems including multi-beam sounders and modern side sonars as well as advanced navigation and communications systems.

The new ships will be operated for over 330 days of the year, half as much again as the ships they are replacing, and will be more capable of operating in rougher seas.

However, the departure of Bulldog means that a famous ship name will disappear from the Royal Navy.

Of the eight Bulldogs that have served since 1782, the most renowned was the World War II destroyer of the name which in 1941, while escorting an Atlantic convoy, was instrumental in seizing an Enigma machine and codes from the sinking submarine U-110.

Motoring with Glynn Williams

Vauxhall with a touch of Lotus

VAUXHALL has taken a bold step for a mainstream manufacturer to launch a no-nonsense two-seater sports car for purists, working with Lotus.

The VX220, the company's first sports car for 90 years,

looks the business and it flies, for although there is only around 150bhp on tap, the whole machine weighs only 875kg – around half that of an Astra.

That is thanks to its all-aluminium 2.2-litre engine and use of aluminium and composites for the chassis and bodywork, inspired by

the Lotus Elise although only 10 per cent of the parts are shared.

It has a longer wheelbase and wider track than the Lotus.

The performance speaks for itself. The car sprints to 60mph in just 5.6 seconds with a potential top speed of 135mph, and yet is capable of averaging around 33mpg.

Although peak torque is gained at 4,000rpm, most of it is available from under 2,000rpm, giving a lusty response.

Built at a new facility at Hethel, Lotus's home, the mid-engined car has double wishbone independent suspension for superb handling, incisive turning and brilliant brakes thanks to 288mm discs on each hub with AP Racing calipers at the front, Brembo at the back, with an anti-lock system.

I drove the VX220 both at the Goodwood motor circuit where it showed excellent balance, and on the lanes of Sussex where the ride was firm but not harsh, aided by excellent bucket seats.

The cockpit might appear rather spartan, with luxuries like air conditioning, central locking and electric windows omitted to save weight, but this is ideally a fresh air machine – with the soft top roof panel removed there is little buffeting.

However, on the safety front

● Vauxhall's VX220 – the company's first sports car model for 90 years.

there is still a driver's airbag and seatbelt pre-tensioners.

Another weight-saver is the absence of a spare wheel – you just have an aerosol of get-you-home foam.

Sitting at the wheel I found a comfortable driving position for my six-foot frame, with all controls within easy reach, including the starter button set centrally on the dash.

But while it is great to drive, the VX220, like the Elise, is not that easy to get into or exit, especially with the roof on, thanks to its high and wide sills.

However, if you want a great drive and you can afford the exclusivity of just 1,000 cars a year being made for the UK, you will find a way, as a Ferrari salesman once said to me.



CAR FACTS

MODEL: Vauxhall VX220 two-

seat roadster.

PRICE: £22,995.

ENGINE: Mid-mounted, all-aluminium, 2.2-litre, 16-valve, twin-cam producing 147PS at 5,800rpm; torque 203Nm at 4,000rpm.

TRANSMISSION: Rear-wheel drive and Getrag five-speed

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PERFORMANCE: 0-60 in

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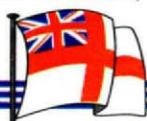


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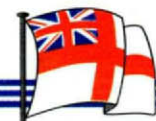
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Helping Hands



In Brief

A FLIGHT deck village fete and a beard-growing competition helped HMS Marlborough raise £1,000 for her adopted charity during her deployment to the Gulf.

The cash, handed over by Capt Duncan Potts, the Commanding Officer of the frigate, will go to the Mayor of Marlborough's fund for scanners which can diagnose meningitis in just 30 minutes.

CHELSEA pensioners and staff at the Royal Hospital have been given 600 commemorative NAAFI tea caddies, packed with tea, in honour of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War.

SSAFA Forces Help has five guaranteed places in the London Marathon on April 22, and want to hear from RN or RM runners who could raise money for them. Contact Gabriele Ghany on 0207 463 9260 or at gabi.g@ssafo.org.uk

A CHARITY casino organised by mess social secretary WO Rocky O'Rourke, aided by WPO Sharon Brown and PO Brian Brooke, in the WO & SR Mess at Clyde Naval Base raised £451 – enough to take a special needs child from a Naval family or the local community on an HCPT RN (Scotland) pilgrimage to Lourdes at Easter.

STEVE Mason, a duty centre manager at the Drumfark Centre in Churchill Square, Helensburgh, has organised a charity evening for March 3, including pool, darts and dominoes (for over-16s, entry fee £1), discos (under-18s, 50p, until 10pm; adults 10pm-2am), a raffle, and an auction of football items.

Money raised will help Yorkhill Hospital in Glasgow research childhood leukaemia. Details on 01436 675350.

Centurion staff splash out

SOAKING senior staff trapped in stocks was, perhaps not surprisingly, the most popular event at Centurion Building's Michaelmas Fayre.

Damp sponges were abandoned for full buckets of water as staff at the Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency in Gosport really got in the swing of things – all for the sake of charity, of course.

Various events, including fancy dress,

darts competitions and quizzes, ran throughout the day, while cake, plant and bric-a-brac stalls did good business during the lunch-break.

A total of £2,235 was raised by the event, and the money will be distributed to local charities.

● Assistant Director (Operations) Capt David Burton does his bit for charity in the stocks at the Centurion Building Michaelmas Fayre.



Grand prix, grand result



● Two racers snake through a series of bends at the Daytona Raceway in London during a race in support of the Royal Star and Garter Home for Disabled Ex-Servicemen and Women.

Picture: WO(PHOT) Stu Antrobus

THE ROYAL Navy provided the greatest presence at a charity go-kart competition – and although they failed to get among the places, they played their part in raising more than £8,000.

Teams representing the Navy, HMS Illustrious and Thunderer Squadron competed with the other Armed Forces, the Civil Service and private sector firms in the 80-driver Daytona endurance races at Park Royal in London.

Apart from raising money, the event also helped raise the profile of the Royal Star and Garter Home for Disabled Ex-Servicemen and Women, and Director of Racing Maj Tony Maher RM said it was a great success, and would continue as a milestone fundraising event.

Four hours of furious racing and two sprint finals ended with the Civil Service team beating the RAF into second spot, with Abbey National third.

The evening, which had opened with Simon Weston welcoming the drivers, was rounded off by buglers from the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Portsmouth, playing *Sunset*.

Trafalgar supports museum

THE ROYAL Navy Submarine Museum Centennial Appeal is almost £500 better off, thanks to a lunch party held on board HMS Trafalgar for Mr and Mrs Richard Bateman and friends of Bateman Financial Planning Ltd.

In addition to that cheque, for £490, two members of the ship's company supported the Children of Chernobyl appeal by having their bodies waxed. MEM Godfrey and CPO Thompson raised more than £600.

Brits help US charity

EFFORTS by the British community in Norfolk, Virginia, resulted in more than \$5,300 being presented to a local cancer charity named after a 16-year-old American girl, Lee Filer, who died of Hodgkins Disease in 1978.

Events included two officers competing in a marathon, sponsored cycle rides, a slimathon by Admiral Sir James Perowne, Deputy SACLAN, fundraising by British wives, and a year-long initiative by the British Golf Society.

Capt Ian Hewitt, who handed over the cash and cheque to Lee's Friends, was himself treated for throat cancer in the United States in 1999, and wanted to show his appreciation for the excellent medical support he received.

Mess is in fashion

MORE than 200 people attended a fashion show at HMS Dryad, raising over £1,000 in the process.

The show, organised by CPO Julie Behan and CPO Jo Hopkins, raised £1,047 for the Portsmouth branch of the Motor Neurone Disease Association (MNDA), the adopted charity of the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates Mess at Dryad.

A range of clothes for the show was provided by Asda at Waterloo, Top & Bottom, also of Waterloo, and Charles Gale, of Fareham.

Golf raffle aids school

KEEN golfers from HMS Neptune helped raise £500 for a Helensburgh respite care scheme.

A raffle during the HMS Neptune Open 2000 tournament was used to raise funds for the Ardlui Respite Care Scheme at Parklands School.

The cheque was presented by Neptune Golf Association secretary Terry Heaney and Rear Admiral Derek Anthony, Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland – himself a keen golfer and president of the Neptune Golf Association.

Run for dogs

ROYAL Marine commando Steve Darby, who is based at RMB Poole, is running in the London Marathon in April to raise money for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. Any potential sponsors should ring Steve on 07968 397738.

Marathon rowers should top £5,000

TEN rowers completed a 24-hour rowathon in Kosovo for an injured colleague, raising an estimated £5,000.

The team, from the Medical Squadron, Combat Service Support Battalion, accumulated 336,378 metres in their efforts to help POMA Derek Whitfield, a Royal Navy medic who was paralysed in a road accident last summer.

Liquid Power sponsored the row, providing T-shirts, energy powder and water bottles.

Derek's rehabilitation at the Duke of Cornwall Unit of Salisbury Hospital is going well,

and he can now get about in his wheelchair.

Doctors hope Derek will be able to go home within the next couple of months.

The team was CPOMA Dave Pickering, Cpl Stuart Beeston, MAQ Charlie Morgan, MA Laura Drakes, Musn Smudge Smith, S/Lt Jake Wade, Lt Andy Robinson, Cpl Tim Silverwood, Mne Elvis Hayes and CPOMT Gary Newman.

If anyone would like to contribute, they should make cheques payable to "RM Chivenor Central Bank", and send them to S/Lt Jake Wade, Medical Squadron, RMB Chivenor, Barnstaple, Devon.

Buckets of change will make a difference

A BUCKET pyramid of foreign coins could add about £5,000 to Cancer Research Campaign funds.

Throughout the summer months and beyond, staff at Devonport Naval Base and sailors from ships and submarines have been throwing leftover francs, pesetas, drachmas and the like into buckets placed throughout the West Country establishment.

Now weighing in at 79kg, the coins will be converted to sterling by the CRC Bank Organisation, and it is estimated that the total will reach £5,000.

The cash was handed over to Admiral Sir Hugo White, the chairman of Buckland Monachorum CRC committee, by the Naval Base Commander, Commodore Ric Cheadle.

All for DEBRA

STAFF and students at the RN Regulating School hope to have raised more than £500 during a 24-hour rowathon in aid of the DEBRA Society.

The row, at HMS Excellent, was started by Commodore Adrian Munns, Commodore of the Portsmouth establishment.

Their cash will help research into new methods of diagnosis and treatment for dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa, a debilitating genetic skin-blistering condition.

Smarties have the answer

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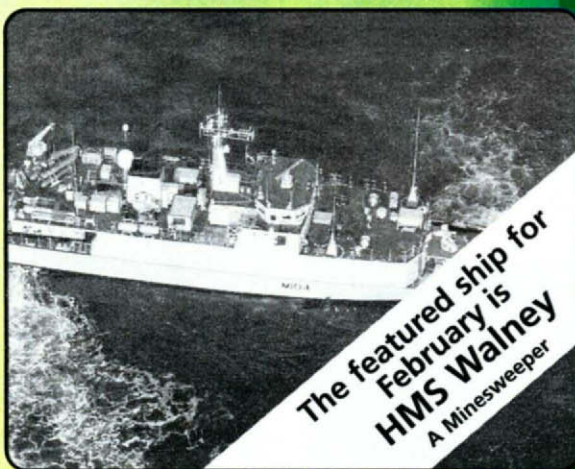
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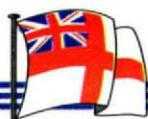
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Sport



Rowers work their way south

PURSUIT of fitness has continued apace as HMS Endurance made her way from home waters towards Antarctica.

Entering the Royal Navy's Concept II rowing competition at the end of last year proved a good start to their long deployment, with C/Sgt Breach winning the men's 2,000m and the women's 4,000m race.

The rowing machines were positioned on the fo'c'sle for the competition, which took place under a tropical sun as the patrol ship steamed past the Canary Islands – the fresh breeze and blue sea and sky making a better location than the ship's gym.

There have been plenty of other sporting opportunities for the ship's company to keep fit on the passage south.

Daily circuit training, hands to bathe, volleyball and deck hockey have been staged to make the most of the warm weather before everyone settles down to a busy work period in colder climes.

Refs at Wembley for finale

NAVY referees joined the 'End of an Era' celebrations at Wembley Stadium.

A number of matches were arranged to commemorate the London stadium's place in the nation's sporting history.

And six RN referees officiated at one of the final games, receiving commemorative medals in front of the Royal Box after the final whistle.

This was followed by the annual RN Referees' seminar, held at HMS Excellent, at which two Premiership referees – Paul Alcock and Rob Styles – were joined by John Baker, the Football Association's director of referees, and Mick Pierce, the chairman of the Association of Premier and Football Officials.

After the speakers had finished, an open forum ranged across a number of subjects, from foul and abusive language and the professional foul to appointments and correspondence.

PO Boosey (Plymouth) was presented with his Referee of the Year award by Paul Alcock.

● Referee WO Andy Matthews (centre) at Wembley with his assistants for the match, WO Kev Griggs (left) and PO Nobby Clarke.



Gary leads runners to rare victory

THE ROYAL Navy cross-country team gained its first Westward league win for a number of years – led home by runaway race winner Gary Gerrard, writes Lt Graeme Riley.

Cpl Gerrard (Cdo Log) followed up his fine 3rd place in the Devon championship with the win at Bideford.

In freezing conditions, Gary was content to follow the strong early running of Ronnie James of Exeter Harriers, with Mne Tim Davies (42 Cdo) working hard to hang on to the leading pair.

As Tim began to pay for his early run-

ning, Gary began to push the pace, and gradually opened a gap to win by 30 seconds.

Tim put on a gutsy display to hang on to third place, proving he will be a strong contender for the inter-Services cross-country event next month.

Further back, LPT Sean Childs (BRNC) held off Lt Graeme Riley (HMS Drake) in a tremendous sprint finish for 7th place, while Lt Cdr Ken Houlberg just had the edge over LS Pete Waumsley in another close finish, Ken closing up the team scoring in 23rd place.

With four in the first ten, RNAC took

the honours, and with three second placings already, the team goes top of the league with two races remaining.

In the Hampshire League, LCK John Potts (HMS York) proved sea time need not dull the competitive edge, with fourth place in a tough race.

Judicious use of the ship's exercise bike and flight deck circuits – plus an 18m 43s Rock Race in Gibraltar, making John one of fewer than 20 runners to have broken the magical 20-minute mark for this gruelling race – helped John lead the team gain top spot in Division Three, well on course for promotion.



● MEM Maxwell, in the dark shirt, lands a left hook on his opponent.

Handy Hindley beats the odds

ROYAL Navy cruiserweight champion OM Tony Hindley caused a major upset in a match against the US Navy team during the British tour to California.

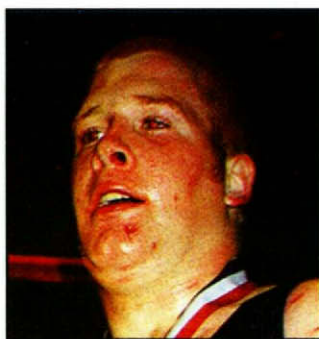
Hindley, ranked sixth in the UK, took on the American Navy champion Israel Spencer, who was in the running for the US Olympic team and plans to turn professional this year, against the wishes of the home team's coaches.

RN boxing coach POPT Q Shillingford explained that the Americans wanted to stage an exhibition bout – with no final decision – as they felt their man was too good for Hindley.

But Q declined the offer, and in the final round of a close, hard-fought match, Hindley landed a devastating body blow which slowed Spencer.

This was the signal for a vicious flurry of punches from Hindley, which resulted in the judges awarding him the bout on a unanimous decision.

The RN team had been taking part in a joint training camp with



● OM Tony Hindley.

the Americans in Port Hueneme, California, and the match, in a packed 2,000 seat gym, was the culmination of their efforts.

RN heavyweight champion Mick O'Connell lost by a majority verdict in a gruelling bout, the men winning a standing ovation, while LPT Stuart O'Connor was stopped in a bout in which he gave away weight and experience, though he had been doing well to keep his opponent at bay.

Mne David Tang's non-stop aggressive attacks proved too much for his man, and the Briton ended the contest with a thunderous uppercut.

MEM Spike Hughes, who put on a fine show of skilful boxing on his RN debut, was just on the wrong side of a split decision, but MEM Max Maxwell won a unanimous vote – his 11th win in 13 Navy bouts – by moving around his dangerous opponent while delivering fast, accurate combinations.

Light welterweight Mne Jimmy Cusick and his opponent were both dumped on the canvas, and the Briton just lost the decision.

Mne Oggy Ogden and AEM Vaughan Perkins put on a special

bout, which Ogden won on a unanimous decision.

The squad managed to get in some sightseeing, and drew a crowd on Venice Beach, where they undertook a training session including pad work, skipping and shadow boxing.

Q said the brief tour had been a great success, and paid tribute to coaches Sgt Tommy McPhee, Cpl Cal Callaghan and LPT Steele.

As Navy News went to press the squad was preparing for the Combined Services championships at RAF Uxbridge.

The squad gave up much of their Christmas leave voluntarily to return to training on December 27 in order to be in good shape for the championships.

Q is hopeful of some good results at the event, which is also the first round of the national championships.

The next date to note is the Navy Cup on February 13-15 at HMS Collingwood, where establishments and ships can enter boxing teams of all standards.

Further details from LPT Jay Steele on 93825 2233 or RN boxing administrator Steve Penberthy on 9380 27181.

■ ROYAL Navy boxers narrowly won a contest against the West of Scotland Select team – but charity was the real winner, with £3,500 being shared between King George's Fund for Sailors and the Yorkhill Hospital children's ward.

The Dark Blues won the challenge by just one bout, and MEM Hughes was presented with the Louis Bernard shield for best boxer of the evening.

The annual event, organised by POPT Jason Wallace at HMS Neptune, attracted more than 180 spectators from the Clyde Naval Base and local businesses.

Pipped at final whistle

A YOUNG RN rugby team lost on the final kick of their match against Combined London Old Boys.

The XV, which contained just a handful of capped players, went behind almost immediately, but in an entertaining game with slick handling, played in freezing conditions, they had hauled themselves into the lead by the second half.

But a last-gasp penalty in front of the posts gave the Old Boys a one-point advantage, 30-29, as the referee blew for full time.

However, there were encouraging signs ahead of the big inter-Services clash with the Army.

Scoreboard for rugby XIII

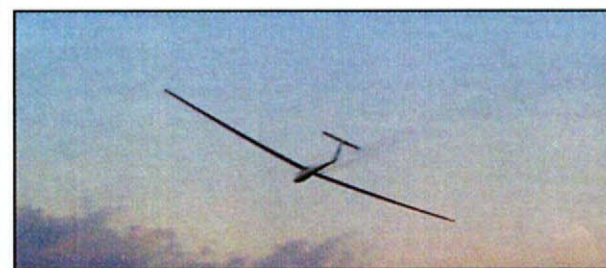
NAVAL engineering artificers completing an electronics HND at HMS Collingwood know the score – and now the RN rugby league side does, as well.

The group presented a scoreboard, which they designed and constructed, to Admiral John Chadwick, president of RN Rugby League, just before the team's second-round Silk Cut Challenge Cup clash with Eccles.

Wet win

POOR conditions made for a one-sided Navy Cup hockey tie when Lympstone hosted HMS Heron.

Although the away side led by just a single goal at the break, the second half was one-way traffic, with the visitors finally rounding off a 6-0 win.



● Releasing water ballast after a cross-country flight.

John soars to triple Diamond

JOHN Bradbury has become the first Royal Navy glider pilot since the 1950s to complete the British Gliding Association (BGA) Diamond Award treble.

WO Bradbury, of HMS Collingwood, was invited by the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association to join their expedition to Darling Downs in Australia.

John and his colleagues – 14 from the RAF and one Army pilot – clocked up more than 700 hours between them, covering 50,000km, helped by the exceptional weather conditions in the region.

John himself managed 63 hours of flying, covering

3,256km, and he achieved his personal aim of making a 500km flight.

This meant he gained the third BGA Diamond Award, which are presented for height and distance achievements.

John thanked the RN Gliding and Soaring Association, the Sports Lottery and the Collingwood Amenity Fund for their help with funding for the expedition.

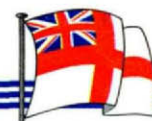
John, a fully-qualified BGA gliding instructor, is a member of the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club, and is keen to introduce Navy colleagues to the sport.

Contact him on HMS Collingwood ext 2656.



● WO John Bradbury in his glider at Darling Downs.

Sport



Navy archers take all the honours

NAVY archers capped a successful season by taking the honours at the inter-Services indoor competition, staged at the national Indoor Championships at Stoke Mandeville.

The Navy side, consisting of Lt Nigel Taylor, CPOMEA Tony Whitwham, OM2 Mark Williams and C/Sgt Simon Needham, looked a good bet for the title, as Simon had been selected to shoot for Great Britain in the Sydney Olympics.

Sure enough, the Olympian went on to take the individual title, and the rest of the Navy team all shot steadily to take first place by a considerable margin from the Army.

The association (reserves and ex-Service) team prize went to Per Ardua, the RAF side, although the Navy's Mid Jonathan Parker showed up well by shooting a personal best.

The inter-Services outdoor com-

petition was held at the Battle of Britain shoot at Burnham-on-Sea, by which time Navy star Simon Needham had left for Sydney.

But his team-mates still managed to make it a double by taking first place, although they had to work a little harder than at Stoke Mandeville.

Lt Taylor, CPOMEA Barry Green and CPOMEA Whitwham finished less than ten points ahead of the Army.

The individual title went to the Navy again, Barry Green carrying on where Simon Needham left off, and Tony Whitwham came third, missing out on the benchmark 1,000 points by very little.

Per Ardua again took the association prize, with Mid Jonathan Parker and Martyn Paine making up the Navy entry.

Next year will hopefully see the inception of a compound competition alongside the traditional recurve event and Navy championship.

Brothers bobbing along in Germany

LEE, Carl (and Bob) are hoping to make a dream team on the Services winter sports scene.

Mne Lee Johnston (left of picture) has been the Royal Navy bobsleigh champion for the past eight years, and is also now a Navy bobsleigh coach.

On the recent expedition to Winterberg, in Germany, Lee took the opportunity to take along his brother Carl as brakeman.

Carl is a recent recruit to the Royals, and is currently serving at RMR Tyne.

Picture: L(PHOT) Angie Pearce.

Twin blow to football prospects

THE NEW year started with two defeats for the Navy football team – and there is still some work to be done if the Senior Service are going to end the season on a high, writes Lt Cdr Jim Danks.

A seven-goal thriller against the Prison Service saw the visitors edge the result, despite falling behind twice in the first half to a POPT Steve Riley penalty and a powerful Cpl Sean Foster header which went in off a defender.

The home side were caught napping after the break, and were two goals down by the hour mark.

Coach Neil Frame sought to ring the changes by bringing on Cpl Bob Hope and OM Nigel Geddis in attack, and it was Hope who scored eight minutes from time to give the Navy heart.

The Navy staged a determined finish, with Riley and Hope both missing chances, but they could not find a way through.

Despite the defeat, it was an entertaining match from which Neil Frame will have drawn satisfaction in the shape of the Navy's attacking approach play, but the defence will have caused him some concern as they conceded four goals against the Prison Service for the second season running.

The following week saw Hampshire visit Burnaby Road in the South West Counties competition, and although the two sides again served up an entertaining game, Navy weaknesses again consigned the dark Blues to defeat.

The county began in confident fashion, testing OM Jamie McGall in the Navy goal, and the pressure paid off after a quarter of an hour when Hampshire forward Tommy Pegler ran through and beat the keeper from the edge of the area.

As play switched from end to end both sides went close, but it was Hampshire who scored again with an untidy goal just before the break, and although the Navy turned up the heat in the second half they went 3-0 down through an excellent individual goal.

Better play from the home side was rewarded when Riley netted from close range, but a frantic finish by the Navy came to nothing.

The second-half performance showed that the Navy has the potential to win matches, but they will need to give more solid all-round performances.

The Navy entertain the Civil Service at Burnaby Road on February 15 (ko 14.30) and play Guernsey for the Commodore's Cup on February 22.

Exmouth FC is the venue for a League match against Devon on February 28 (ko 19.30), and the Metropolitan Police visit Burnaby Road on March 6 (ko 19.30).

On Wednesday March 14 the Navy play the Army in the inter-Services championship at Home Park, Plymouth Argyle's ground. Entry is free, and the game kicks off at 17.00.

The following evening the RN Women play the Army at Burnaby Road, Portsmouth, kick-off at 19.30.

Runners sought for gruelling course

RN AND RM runners are sought for a tough sporting event.

The Military Challenge takes place at the Army Training Regiment's base at Pirbright, Surrey, on March 25 to raise money for charities, including the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

The Armed Forces, emergency services and the fittest civilians will compete on a major Army assault course, although there will be the opportunity to just complete a run.

Entry fees are £8 per person, with discounts for teams of three. For details and an entry form, see www.freemile.co.uk, telephone 0870 241 3807, or send an e-mail to raceinfo@freemile.co.uk

Indoor tennis dates loom

THE ROYAL Navy women's indoor tennis tournament will be held in the Indoor Tennis Centre, Burnaby Road, Portsmouth, on Friday, February 16.

The tournament is open to all serving RN women and QARNNs of all standards. Anyone wishing to play should contact POWPT Fincher on 9380 ext 24191.

The men's tournament will be held at the same venue on Friday, March 30. Potential entrants should contact LPT Wheeler on 9380 ext 24151.

Urgent call for instructors

ADVENTUROUS Training Instructors are urgently required for training package Operation Palatine on the isle of Brac, on the Dalmatian coast in the Adriatic.

Personnel will be required for a minimum of two weeks, and divers are urgently required.

Further details from Katherine Thompson at HQ Training Support Command (Land) on 94381 2073, 2072, or fax 2076.

Coach sets up winning season

THE COACHING skills of Gaynor Adams helped the HMS Sultan hockey squad on their way to a near-flawless season.

Miss Adams, a civilian, took eight sessions at the start of the season, working particularly on individual skill development and team-building techniques.

The players then went out and put the theory into practice on the pitch, starting at the Portsmouth Area Sixes competition, where the Gosport establishment lost at the semi-final stage to the eventual winners, HMS Dryad.

In the Portsmouth Area League, the Sultan side won seven of their eight matches, giving them the title.

The award for top goal scorer in the Sultan squad went to Lt Colin Dick, and the high point was deemed to be CPO Steve Keogh's penalty flick against HMS Nelson.

Apart from Miss Adams and the players themselves, credit for the squad's success must also go to the committee – Lt Cdr R Gillies (team manager), WO Cole (team captain) and LPT Clayton (team secretary) for their hard work throughout the season.

Paddlers seek challenge and competition at home and overseas

Kayakers head for the high ground

A PARTY of kayakers from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines flew around the world to seek a real challenge – then took the helicopters to ensure they were being tested to the limit.

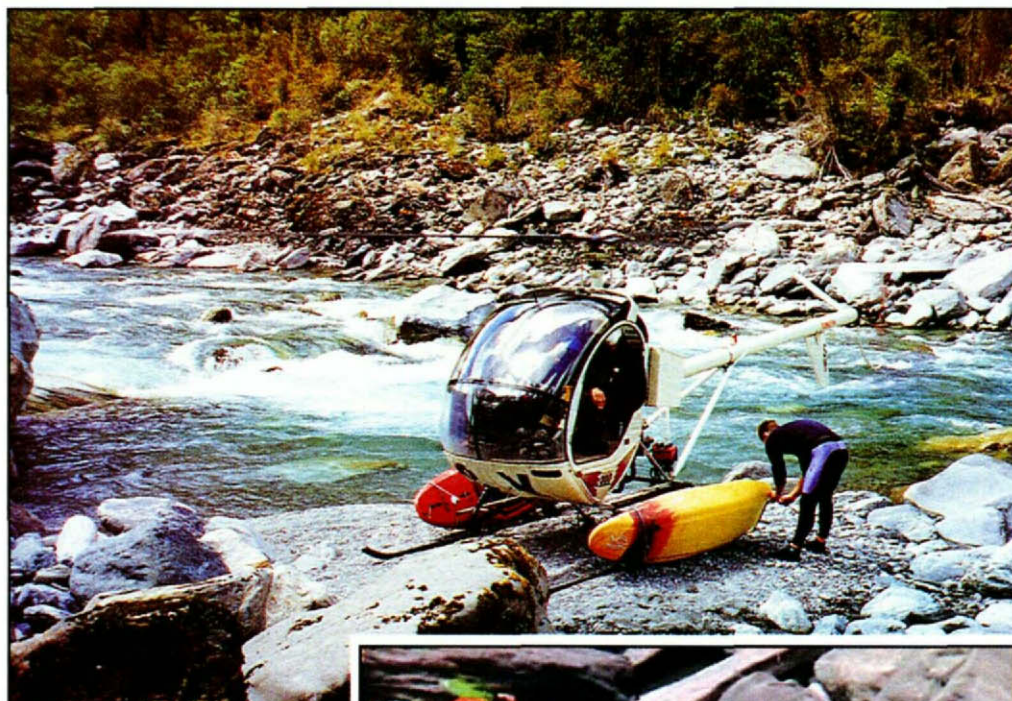
The ten-strong team went to New Zealand for Exercise Kiwi Flip, spending two weeks paddling some of the finest alpine white water in the world.

Under expert tuition from kayak guru Mick Hopkinson, the team went through a rigorous training package at the NZ Kayak School on the South Island, starting with pool sessions to brush up on personal skills.

Then it was on to the white water, and more than a dozen rivers were mastered during the first week as they honed their techniques in preparation for the grand finale.

This was a helikayaking trip on the West Coast, using helicopters to get to remote access points on four classic white water runs.

The testing rivers, with a stunning backdrop of moun-



● RN and RM kayakers used a helicopter (above) to reach the most challenging white water (right).

tains, made a big impression on the paddlers – more pictures are available at expedition website www.expedkiwi-flip.co.uk

The package allowed kayaking skills to be developed to ensure the RN and RM can mount such expeditions around the world in the future.



RN surf team is rusty

A NAVY team was entered in the inter-Services kayak and waveski surf championships for the first time in seven years – and found success hard to come by.

Five kayakers and one waveski competitor against 12-strong Army and RAF teams in 2-3ft of onshore surf at Rhosneiger in Anglesey.

Sgt Polly Parrot made the quarter-finals of the kayaking, finishing joint ninth, with the RN/RM team trailing behind the RAF, who won, and the Army.

The result of the waveski competition was the same, though CPO Andy Vine took third place in the individual event.

Navy competitors were pleased with their showing, considering their lack of competition experience and the size of the team.

This year the RN Kayak Association plans to hold the RN/RM championships before the inter-Services event.

Anyone interested in surf kayaking or waveskiing should contact CPO Andy Vine on 9375 65818.

'... then it's left hand down a bit'



SKILLS in submarine control are demonstrated to the *Princess Royal* during her visit to the Navy stand at the Boat Show. Her mentor is LOM(SSM) Del Stevens and the *Princess* was accompanied by Lt Cdr David Pocock of HMS Neptune.

PO(PHOT) Jim Gibson

Merlin flying ban is lifted

THE NAVY'S new Merlin helicopters are flying again after a safety all-clear. Flying was suspended after one of the aircraft came down in the sea off the Isle of Skye in October.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said the first flight of a Merlin following the lifting of the ban took place on December 21.

Although safety concerns had been resolved, the spokesman said the Air Accident Board had not fully completed its inquiry as *Navy News* went to press, and that no comment could be made about the cause of the crash.

No one was seriously injured in the accident involving an aircraft of the trials unit, 700M Naval Air Squadron based at RN air station Culdrose.

Surgeon dies in car crash

A SURGEON commander home on Christmas leave from Gibraltar died after being injured in a motorway car crash near Bristol.

Surg Cdr James Greer (44) was on his way to his home in Cornwall when the accident happened on December 14. He died two days later at Frenchay Hospital, Bristol.

Dr Greer – known as Seamus – was Principal Medical Officer at Gibraltar. He had previously served in HMS Fearless and had been PMO at HMS Drake.

Navy uranium ammunition phase-out 'not due to safety'

CONTRARY to press reports the Royal Navy is not phasing out depleted uranium ammunition because of safety concerns, the Ministry of Defence has said.

Some British warships are equipped with Vulcan Phalanx close-in defence systems using depleted uranium rounds, but recent improvements in technology have resulted in development of a tungsten-based Phalanx round which has a longer range and "higher kill probability", a MOD spokesman told *Navy News*.

The US-designed Phalanx system using depleted uranium – or DU – rounds equips the Royal Navy's 11 Type 42 air defence destroyers, the aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal, the assault ship HMS Fearless and the helicopter carrier HMS Ocean.

They will continue to use DU rounds until supplies are exhausted in 2003.

Risk assessment has shown that precautionary measures ensure that there is no risk to Naval personnel involved in the loading, handling, firing or cleaning of the weapons.

Meanwhile, following veterans' concerns about the effect of DU rounds on health, Armed Forces Minister John Spellar announced a voluntary screening programme for personnel who have served in areas where the ammunition had been used.

Mr Spellar said in a Commons statement: "These issues are not new and we must not unduly alarm Service personnel or their families about the position. That said, we do recognise that there are some concerns amongst our people and we recognise a need to reassure them."

He said the debris from DU shells on the battlefield might present a low-level radiological hazard and a hazard from chemical toxicity in the same way as any heavy metal such as lead.

"These risks arise from the dust created when DU strikes a hard target... In its massive form, as expended rounds or solid fragments it is a negligible hazard."

In response to health concerns among veterans, a medical assessment programme for those who served in the Gulf War – in which 100 rounds of DU ammunition were expended against Iraqi armour – showed no evidence of kidney damage which would be the chief indication of heavy-metal poisoning.

As for radiological damage there was no evidence after ten years of a higher rate of cancer among Gulf veterans compared with a control group.

Screening offer too late says Legion

THE ROYAL British Legion says the Government's announcement of voluntary screening for veterans who could have come into contact with depleted uranium had come too late.

The Legion said the announcement had been made as a result of public and news media pressure as opposed to concern for veterans' welfare. The belated Ministerial statement was not enough to restore confidence and trust among Service people past, present and future, said the Legion.

On the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of the Gulf War, the organisation also renewed its appeal for a public inquiry into illnesses among veterans of the conflict.

The Legion said that such a measure would provide veterans and Service people with the same level of treatment received in the USA where a Presidential Commission was set up.

£1 billion contract for first Type 45s

FIRST THREE of the Navy's new Type 45 destroyers are to be built by BAe Systems. The £1 billion contract was announced by the Ministry of Defence, making BAe the prime contractor for the Type 45 programme, with responsibility for design, development and delivery.

Procurement Minister Baroness Symons said the Type 45 programme was the most significant warship building project in Britain since the end of World War II. It would provide a huge increase in capability from the day the first of class entered service – due in 2007.

The order is expected to sustain 5,500 jobs. Sub-contractors will be let as soon as BAe Systems have achieved affordable price as an acceptable risk, in accordance with the agreed

building strategy. That is expected to be achieved this year.

A contract for the second batch of three ships is expected to be placed with BAe Systems in about three years.

At 7,200 tonnes, the Type 45s will be the largest and most powerful air defence destroyers ever operated by the Royal Navy.

First ship of the class, HMS Daring, will be built at BAe's Clyde yard and she will be followed by HMS Dauntless.

The class will replace the ageing Type 42 destroyers which began to enter service in the 1970s. The new ships will have a speed in excess of 29 knots and a range of over 7,000 miles.

Primary armament will be PAAMS (the Principal Anti-Air Missile System) being developed in conjunction with France and Italy.



● An artist's impressions of the Type 45 air defence destroyer armed with vertical-launch PAAMS missiles. First of the class is due to enter service in six years.

Published by Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, and printed by Portsmouth Publishing and Printing Ltd, The News Centre, Hilesea, Portsmouth, PO2 9SX

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